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A CAPTIVE OF LOVE

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A CAPTIVE OF LOVE

A ROMANCE

FROM THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE OF
KYOKUTEI BAKIN

BY
EDWARD GREY

LONDON AND GLASGOW
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1911

THE CAPTIVE OF LOVE

A ROMANCE

FROM THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OF
THE FRENCH BY
MRS. J. H. B. B. B.

LONDON: J. H. B. B. B.

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PREFACE

THE Publishers believe that the present is a very appropriate time to bring to the notice of the public a translation of a quaint and charming *native* Japanese novel. As yet there does not exist any literal English version of any of the great works of fiction in which Japanese literature has been extremely fertile, but Mr. Greey's ✓ translation is, on the whole, very faithful to the letter of the original, while it reproduces its old-world atmosphere with remarkable fidelity. Bakin is beyond all doubt the greatest Japanese novelist, and the reader will gain a better idea of Japan, as it was before it fell under the influence of Western civilisation not so many years ago, from this romance, than from any history.

The present book has been carefully reprinted from the first edition, of which the title-page is reproduced below. The illustrations, list of illustrations, and a note referring to one of them, have been omitted, but otherwise no change has been made, except on page 84, where an obvious error has been corrected.

A Captive of Love | founded upon Bakin's Japanese Romance | *Kumono Tayema Ama Yo No Tsuki* | (*The Moon shining through a Cloud-rift on a Rainy Night*) | by | Edward Greey | Author of "*The Golden Lotus*," "*Young Americans in Japan*," "*The Wonderful City of Tokio*," "*The Bear-Worshippers of Yezo*," | and one of the Translators of the Japanese | *Historical Romance*, "*The Loyal Ronins*." | *Twenty-six Illustrations from the Original Work* | Boston | Lee and Shepard, Publishers | New York | Charles T. Dillingham | 1886

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

✓ THE kind reception given to "The Loyal Ronins" has induced me to undertake this work, which, while not a translation, follows Bakin's charming romance as closely as possible, in his own quaint style, and contains many details that author would have given had he written for foreign readers.

Bakin, who was one of the famous novelists of Japan, was a prolific writer; and his books, which are historically correct, are regarded as classics.

I selected his *Kumono Tayema Ama Yo No Tsuki* ("The Moon shining through a Cloud-rift on a Rainy Night"), on account of its affording an excellent insight into the thoughts and methods of the Japanese about five hundred years ago, and for its interesting descrip-

tions of superstitions not unknown to our ancestors.

In relating the loves of Saikei and Hachisuba, Bakin depicts the Buddhistic belief of the masses, and ingeniously uses it in the development of his plot.

My pleasant labour has been lightened by the kindness of my esteemed friend, The Hon. S. K. Takahashi, Consul of Japan, whose knowledge of the ancient customs of his country has been of the greatest assistance to me, and to whom I return my warmest thanks.

I am also indebted for books of reference, etc., to many Japanese gentlemen living in New York, especially to Mr. Renzo Sano, who has rendered me valuable service, and taken deep interest in this work.

EDWARD GREEY.

20 EAST 17th St., NEW YORK,
August, 1885.

A CAPTIVE OF LOVE

CHAPTER I

AMADA BUHEI, THE IMPIOUS HUNTER, SLAYS THE-DEER-OF-FIVE-COLOURS

ON a certain month during the third year of the period of Kemmu [A.D. 1335], Lord Sasaki Ujiyori, only eleven years old, was appointed governor of the castle of Kwannon-ji, and of the district of Yeti, in the province of Omi, in Central Japan. The edifice, like all such structures built by the Hojo rulers, was delightfully situated between the rivers of Mori-yama and Yeti; and from its towers could be seen the blue water of Lake Biwa, rippling in the spring, shimmering under the sun of summer, leaf-laden in the fall, or lashed to fury by the gales of winter.

For many years Kwannon-ji stood alone, like a bird-keeper watching the rice-fields; but after the fall of the Hojo, when lichens began to beautify its foundation-stones, the wood of the drawbridges to assume a tone of age, and the broad lotus-leaves to overlap and crowd each other in the moat below, houses were built in its immediate vicinity, and "the solitary refuge for warriors became the eye of a flourishing city."

In the ranges of Musa, in the same district, dwelt a hunter named Amada Buhei, a wicked fellow, who did not consider his happiness in a future state "worth even so much as a drop of dew," and who lived year after year by hunting from mountain to mountain. Even a

person in danger of starvation commits a sinful and cruel act in killing any animal, bird, fish, or insect; it being quite possible that the released soul of the victim may be re-born into a body and state more miserable than the last. Besides, who can be sure, in perpetrating such a crime, that one is not cutting the thread of existence of an honourable ancestor or parent?

These considerations never influenced Amada, although his wife sometimes respectfully reminded him of them; when he would listen with mock attention, then reply, out of the left corner of his mouth,—

"For a good day's hunting, I thank the gods! As to killing wild animals—*saa!* If I did not slay them, they would make a quick death for me." Very sadly: "If the soul of an honourable ancestor, or of my father or mother, unhappily inhabited the bear I killed this morning, I should feel both shame and deep regret. As I am not a woman, to be moved like a leaf in the wind by the breath of a *bozu* [priest], I shall continue to be a hunter,—particularly as I received five *rio* [dollars] for the medicine-bag [gland] I cut out of that bear's neck." Closing his eyes, as though meditating: "Yes, yes, I would like to be as pious as you are; but as the gods have endowed me with

ability to use a bow and arrows, and there are many people in the world who lick their lips when they hear the words 'wild goose,' 'deer,' 'fox,' 'bear,' and 'badger-meat,' I shall continue in my occupation." In a sly tone: "Besides, what would become of the wrestlers of Yeti, if I were to shave my head, and hang up my weapons in the temple of Kwannon?" Opening his eyes, and nodding toward her: "You are a dutiful and virtuous woman, and no doubt believe what you say. Listen to this: When I become too old to pull a bow and admire the flowers, and I cannot tell the taste of *saké* from water, I will renounce my wicked ways, and allow you to work for both of us. Until that time I remain a hunter, even though later on I have to suffer the torments of ten thousand years. The *bozu* cannot scare Amada Buhei!"

To all this, his gentle, obedient wife never uttered one word of reply; though, when she visited the temple, she prayed fervently to Kwannon for the conversion of her husband, and that their son Kataro would some day wear the priest's black robe.

One evening, when she was singing her babe to sleep, Amada returned from a prolonged hunt on the mountain called Iwato [Rock-door], in the province of Omi. Upon entering their hut, he threw down a fine deer, saying,—

"I never felt so proud in my life! Give me a cup of good hot *saké*. I have been walking all day with that load across my shoulders. Be quick! Be quick!"

The woman placed her child upon the earthen floor, bowed respectfully, and hastened away, leaving the hunter crouching near the fire-hole in the centre of the room, and muttering to himself,—

"Too cold! Too cold!"

While he was warming his chilled body, Kataro awoke, and, crawling near to his parent, bowed his head to the floor, sucked in his breath, and said,—

"Honourable father, my tears have been falling ever since you left the other morning. That is a big deer! You are the most courageous hunter in these mountains." In a low tone: "Have you anything in your sleeve for little son?"

Amada turned his face toward him, and replied in a loving manner,—

"Come and put your hand in my bosom."

The child rose, and, walking to his parent, did as he was told; presently discovering a young hare, which his father had captured alive for him. As he hugged it in his childish joy, he bowed and said,—

"Honourable father never forgets little son! I shall be glad when I am old enough to go with you to the mountains. I would like to kill a deer like that one. What beautiful colours it has!"

While Kataro was speaking, his mother entered with the *saké* steaming in a hot-water kettle; seeing which, Amada smiled grimly, and, as she knelt near him and filled his cup, said,—

"A hundred doctors are not as beneficial to a man as this medicine."

After drinking several times, he waited a while without speaking; then, as his wife had not referred to the deer, remarked,—

"I am very sorry that your eyesight is growing so bad."

The woman corrected her position, and, refilling the cup, placed it near him, saying,—

"Now that you have returned, our little son is very happy."

"Honourable mother," whispered Kataro, who had been gazing

earnestly at the deer, "I never saw one like it."

"You speak truly," said Amada, who was slyly watching them both. "That is a wonderful animal, and I have long been endeavouring to get a shot at it." To his wife: "You know the holy priest Setsusan, who has such a great desire to rebuild the temple of Kwannon, that was years ago destroyed by thunder?"

The woman bowed, drew in her breath, and replied,—

"You mean the holy priest who reads the sacred books, called *Fumon-bon*, day and night. He is very anxious to bring people into the true path."

Amada hugged his body with his arms, and, gazing at the fire, said, in a meditative tone,—

"Yes, I know he reads the *Fumon-bon*. Now I will tell you a capital joke."

His wife took the weary little Kataro from the floor, where he was in danger of falling into the fire-hole, and, placing him in the bosom of her robe, began to rock her body, so as to make the babe sleep soundly. As she pressed him to her, she felt the hare nestling between them: so, being very merciful to all creatures, she refrained from holding the boy tightly, for fear of hurting the animal.

Her husband waited until the child was fast asleep; then, glancing up at the sooty rafters, and still remaining in the same position, said,—

"Yes, Setsusan is a holy priest. But for his great piety, I should never have been able to shoot that deer."

"Ah!" murmured his wife. "I feel a chill of surprise! How could a holy *bozu* assist you to do such a wicked thing?"

Amada pursed his lips, chuckled,

nodded his head at the rafters, and presently replied,—

"I have been longing to get a crack at that deer for many months. Look at it, my wife: it has five colours,—five virtues. Its skin will fetch me ten *ryo*, and its horns are very valuable. Any wrestler eating of such fine flesh would be able to conquer all his opponents."

The terrified woman clasped her babe more closely, and, though appearing to listen respectfully, prayed silently. Meanwhile Amada continued,—

"I endeavoured to capture it with dogs; but I never could get within bow-shot, and began to believe it was a badger or fox that had assumed the form of a deer in order to bewitch me. Indeed I was puzzled, and each time I saw it in the distance, ground my teeth, and made a vow that if ever I killed the beast I would abstain from hunting for a month. The other day I visited Mount Iwato to make a last attempt to secure it, believing that success in the matter would bring me"—

He paused, and, unclasping his arms, reached out his right hand for the cup of *sake*, and drained its contents. As he did so, his wife murmured,—

"Great misfortune! Ah, this is indeed a dreadful thing! *Namu Amida Butsu!* [Hail, omnipotent Buddha!]"

Amada placed the cup in a bowl of warm water, that was near the kettle, and continued,—

"I never visit Iwato without making a call on the holy priest Setsusan, whose grass house by the water-fall overlooks the entire valley, and is a good resting-place. Yesterday, as I approached the spot, I heard him reading aloud from the *Fumon-bon*; so I trod softly. Upon nearing the hut, I saw a marvellous sight.

The-deer-of-five-colours was listening to the reading, and gently bowing its head in assent. While I was fitting my arrow, the animal darted away. I remained hidden until the holy priest went out for a visit; then, entering the hut, borrowed the book, and descending to the shadow of the valley, began to read in the same manner as the *bozu*."

Here he paused, and glanced sideways at his wife, who, forgetting the young hare in her bosom, was convulsively clasping her child, while her dilated eyes and protruding eyeballs showed the agitation that possessed her.

"It was good fun," he continued. "I held the book in my right hand, and grasped the bow and arrow with my left. Presently I saw The-deer-of-five-colours moving slowly toward me, nodding its head exactly as it had done to the reading of the holy priest. Although my heart was thumping like a well-beaten drum, I read on until the animal was within range; when I dropped the book, and, raising my good mulberry-wood bow, drove an arrow of mugwort clean through my prize. It gave one bound, and, uttering a cry that sounded like a prayer, fell upon its knees, and died. Congratulate me upon my luck."

His wife—who during his recital had become deathly pale, and in her agony had pressed little Kataro so tightly that she had crushed the life out of the hare—moaned piteously, then sank upon the floor as though struck down by unseen demons.

"Women are very stupid," said Amada, moving towards her. "If she is not careful, she will smother my son." Raising her: "Come, do not be so foolish!"

When she recovered, she sat up on her heels in a dazed manner, and, removing the babe from her bosom, laid him upon a wadded quilt. As

she did so, the dead hare fell from her robe; seeing which she took the little creature in her hands, and began to weep softly, saying, in a low, sad tone,—

"Oh, what a dreadful sin I have committed! I, who was born during the hour, month, and year of the Hare, have murdered my protector! This unconscious crime must surely be the result of some great wrong I have committed in a former state. *Namu, namu, namu!*"

Amada, who watched her with an amused air, bowed his head when she prayed, then remarked,—

"It is very comforting to be so pious—otherwise you are a most foolish woman! Do you imagine the gods bother themselves about a beast like that? Come, fill my cup. I will catch another hare for Kataro."

As he ceased to speak, his wife began to shiver like one stricken with palsy; seeing which, Amada motioned her to take the cup, and raising the *saké*-bottle from the hot-water vessel, said,—

"Drink some of this good liquor. A chill like yours often ends in a bad sickness."

The woman, having made a gesture of thanks, crawled to the spot where her babe was sleeping. She laid the dead hare beside him, placed her arms about the little fellow, drew him into her robe, and rested his cheek upon hers. After a while she fumbled in her sleeve for her rosary, and began to pray; pausing every now and then, and uttering a moan of pain.

Her husband watched her from the corners of his eyes, and thought,—

"Women are strange creatures, and are a great mystery to me. They have both very foolish and truly wise ideas, but never know how to use them at the right time. I suppose she is comforted by

repeating *Namu*, and moving those beads; and—who knows?—she may some day attain the lotus seat.” Drowsily: “The bottle is empty, so I will sleep.”

He stretched himself upon the floor, and soon his snores shook the roof like thunder.

During the hour of the Hare [four to six A.M.], he was awakened by the moaning of his wife, who had risen, and was kneeling near him with her hands tightly clasped over her heart.

“Do not trouble me; I am tired,” he grumbled; then rubbing his eyes, and discovering that she was in great agony, added, “Warm some *saké*. The cold principle is in the ascendency; burn it out.”

“Honourable husband,” she faintly replied, “I feel that I am about to travel the lonely road. I beg of you to listen to my last words.”

“Last words!” he said in an affrighted tone. “That is foolishness. You are a young woman, and have many years to live.”

“No, no,” she said. “Indeed I speak truly, for my feet have been dead some time.”

This alarmed him; and, sitting up, he regarded her by the pale light of the dawn, and was convinced that she had spoken the truth. He made some hot tea, and urged her to drink it; but she could not, and it was with great difficulty that she said,—

“Honourable husband, I have ever endeavoured to be a good and obedient wife; though I know I have often given you great cause for anger and displeasure, for which forgive me.”

Amada nervously grasped his arms, and dug his nails into the flesh, while big tears coursed down his cheeks, as he replied,—

“I have never had any great fault to find with my wife.”

The dying woman bowed gratefully, sucked in her breath, and said,—

“You make me feel very happy. Honourable husband, will you grant me a last favour? If our little Kataro, who was born with the sacred mark on his forehead, desires to become a priest, do not ridicule his wish. Remember, his holy life and prayers will obtain great benefits for you after you have departed to the yellow spring. I fear, of all the sins you have committed, killing The-deer-of-five-colours will entail more misery upon yourself and our child than even a hundred holy lives could atone for. Honourable husband, do not forget my last words.”

Amada, “who felt like one torn asunder by wild beasts,” nodded his head; whereupon she respectfully bowed her thanks, and, falling upon her side, “changed her world.”

Her husband prayed by her, and tenderly covered her body with a quilt, then went out to summon the neighbours, who, although miserably poor, were ready to help any one in a time of trouble. Upon entering the hut, they discovered Kataro rubbing the corpse, and saying to himself,—

“Honourable mother very cold! Honourable mother, please wake up and talk to your little boy!”

His prattle made the women weep, and caused the men to compress their lips and blink sympathetically; while his father, no longer able to restrain his grief, took him in his arms, and, walking out into the sunshine, said between his sobs,—

“My son, never forget your honourable mother.”

After burying the body, Amada carried the skin of The-deer-of-five-colours to Kioto, where he disposed of it to a dealer named Tomosada

Monoyemon who re-sold it to a *samurai* [military gentleman] named Ihara Taketoshi, one of the retainers of Nitta Ujimichi; who, being a

Buddhist, kept it secretly as a rare and curious object, little imagining the results that would follow the slaying of the sacred animal.

CHAPTER II

SAIKEI, THE BUDDHIST PRIEST, FORGETS HIS VOWS IN KANZAKI

"THOSE who laugh at the gods enjoy but a brief period of merri-ment." This was written by a pious man who died long ago; and is quite applicable to the case of the hunter, Amada Buhei, who, nine years after the death of his wife, was seized with a dreadful malady, during the paroxysms of which he barked like a dog, screamed at the sight of water, and snapped at all who came near him.

Knowing that his end was near, he sent for his son, and, suppressing his emotion, said,—

"Kataro, I am a pitiful object, and am suffering the torments of the hundred and twenty-eight *ji-goku* all at once. Your mother was a pious woman, and is probably by this time enjoying *goku-raku* [superlative happiness]. I command you to remember my parting words. She ever hoped you might some day wear the black robe. You are now twelve years old, have been a good, studious boy, and never taken the life of any creature. Henceforth devote yourself to works of piety, and endeavour to release your father's soul from countless ages of suffering."

The boy, whose body was shaking with grief, bowed his face to the earthen floor, sucked in his breath, and replied,—

"Honourable father, your command shall be obeyed."

When he raised his head, in order

to take a last look at his parent, he saw that the gods had mercifully released the spirit from the tortured body.

As soon as the neighbours heard the sad news, they came to the hut, and took charge of the corpse, which they buried at their own expense. After this was done, they assembled under a tree near the grave, and the elder of the village said,—

"What will become of the boy? Amada has not left the value of a single hair. Although we are not rich, we must do something for Kataro."

"*Hai!* [yes]" replied a woodcutter. "He must be provided for, even though our ribs show through our skins."

"*Hai, hai!*" cried the others.

"I have thought of a plan," continued the benevolent elder. "After the death of the boy's mother, Kataro was never even allowed to assist his father in preparing the animals for sale. Amada, who had been a *samurai*, taught the lad to read and write, so he will make a good *bozu*. The boy has a mark upon his forehead like Amida. Let us offer him to the Ju-ji [Living Master] of the temple of Cho-ko. When he becomes a priest, he can pray for the eternal happiness of his parents."

"*Hai, hai!*" ejaculated the villagers.

The next day, head man Gombei prepared a present for the high priest, put on his best clothes, and with about a dozen of the neighbours, who each bore some simple offering, accompanied Kataro to the temple, which was situated high up on the mountain of Musa.

Upon arriving at their destination, they bowed respectfully, and related their errand to the *bozu* on duty at the gate, who had their petition conveyed to the Ju-ji.

The Living Master graciously listened to their request, then said,—

“I remember the boy’s parents. The father was the impious man who killed The-deer-of-five-colours, and caused the death, through sorrow at his act, of my brother Setsusan; and the mother was a truly good woman. So she desired that the lad should become a priest? Her prayers shall be answered by my aid. Accept the offerings brought by the villagers, and let the youth be instructed in his duty.”

This decision was conveyed to the boy’s friends, who, when they took leave of him, said,—

“Now you are about to become a great man!”

Kataro wept, and, kneeling, performed the respectful salutation to the head man Gombei, and his other friends, saying,—

“Honourable masters, I thank you a hundred thousand times for your goodness to this bad boy.”

Then he followed the *bozu*, and from that hour began the study necessary to fit him for the priesthood.

The temple of Cho-ko belonged to the Shin-gon sect, who practise the three rites of *shin-mitsu* [worshipping Buddha with the hands in certain positions, termed signs], *go-mitsu* [repeating the mystic

formula Dharani], and *i-mitsu* [contemplation]; also fasting to perfect the spiritual vision.

Kataro, who soon became a favourite with the *bozu*, quickly learned his duties, which consisted of attending upon the priests, dusting the sacred images, and in studying the forms and ceremonies of the order,—a branch of the Shin-gon called Jiu-jiu-shin, that believes in ten stages of spiritual knowledge, beginning in utter ignorance, and ending in perfect enlightenment or the attainment of Buddha-ship.

At the expiration of a year’s probation, Kataro’s head was shaven, he took the vows of the sect, and received the religious name of Saikei [West-open or enlightened], after which he was instructed in the doctrine of Dai-nichi, and taught to read the three *sutras* [scriptures], *Dai-nichi Kio*, *Sho-shitchi Kio*, and *Kongo-cho Kio*.

Saikei, as we shall in future call him, lived six years of this tranquil existence, free from all care or thought of the outer world and its miseries, never even desiring to go beyond the grounds of the temple. As manhood approached, he grew strong of body; and notwithstanding his severe training, his mind would sometimes revert to his old life, when he would think,—

“Although my honourable parents were formerly *samurai*, they were, at my birth, exceedingly poor, and my honourable father’s occupation was very degrading. I am therefore regarded by every one who visits this temple as of low origin; and even were I to rise to be the Living Master, the people would secretly say, ‘His father was a hunter, and is therefore in *ji-goku*!’ Ah, I am indeed unfortunate. I would like to become a Ju-ji, to live in a magnificent temple surrounded with trees, flowers, and beautiful ponds, to

have many students who would regard me with great veneration, and to save people's souls from misery after death. I fear I can never attain my desire if I remain here where I am so well known."

These thoughts so tormented him, that he finally begged for an audience with the Living Master, who, after listening kindly and patiently, said,—

"I will grant you permission to change your residence, and will give you a letter of recommendation to the Ju-ji of the Shin-gon temple in Kukuchi, near Kanzaki, in the province of Settsu."

This kindness gave Saikei great satisfaction, and he could scarcely find words with which to express his thanks.

The next day he quitted the temple of Cho-ko, and, after visiting the tombs of his parents, called upon his kind-hearted old friends in his native village; who gave him a hearty reception, and presented him with a pilgrim's staff and a small sum of money to help him on his way.

Saikei bade adieu to his birth-place with mingled feelings of regret and satisfaction, and set out upon his journey, jingling the iron rings of his staff, and carrying his load of sacred books as though the latter were no heavier than a feather. He was nineteen years old, and, notwithstanding his black robe and shaven head, very handsome,—a fact he soon learned through hearing the village girls whisper,—

"Is not that holy priest beautiful?"

These remarks always caused him to jingle his staff and to utter the prayer,—

"*Namu Amida ! Namu Amida !*"

There is an old saying, "A good-looking priest requires no inn;" and Saikei quickly discovered the

truth of the proverb, for, whenever he could not find a temple in which to lodge for the night, some pious person would say,—

"Holy priest, rest yourself in my humble abode."

Although he never looked at a woman's face, beyond ascertaining by a quick glance that the person who approached him was of the opposite sex; nor did he ever talk with one, other than with downcast eyes to make inquiry as to his road,—a strange feeling began to possess him, that in becoming a priest he had forfeited all that makes existence charming. However, by praying, fasting, and meditation at the many sacred places on his way, he succeeded in banishing the idea, and in due time arrived at the Shin-gon temple.

The Living Master received him graciously, and after reading his letter of introduction, said,—

"You have now arrived at the most dangerous period of your existence in your present state. I warn you to imitate the lives of the saints, and weaken your body so that your spirit may be strong in order to resist temptation."

Saikei bowed respectfully, and murmured,—

"Only the sages lead perfect lives from the beginning to the end; however, I will always follow your instructions."

The young priest passed seven years in the temple, every one admiring his great learning and blameless life. Gradually the praise of the Living Master and of his companions made him proud and arrogant, even to the elder priests, who were "not able to oppose his well-polished eloquence;" and finally all his associates but the Living Master secretly hated him.

In addition to this, he would often, while pretending to be meditating

during the ceremonies to which the public were admitted, slyly regard some pretty girl among the audience, and think,—

"What is the good of being a *bozu*?"

One day he saw a very beautiful *koto*-player watching him out of the corners of her eyes, and he thought,—

"Even my shaven head and black robe do not frighten her. The Eternal Buddha was once married. Alas, alas! I shall never know that happiness! It was an unlucky day for me when head man Gombei took me to the temple of Cho-ko. Had he been less anxious for a long walk, he might have offered me to the Living Master of the Shin-shiu! Ah! that is indeed 'true doctrine.' Shin-ran Sho-nin understood that all men require 'help from another.' If head man Gombei had only taken me to the Shin temple, I might, while becoming a priest of that sect, have been permitted to marry, and eat flesh and fish. Ah! I am in a net! I have taken vows I can never break. How beautiful is that girl! her dress is of five colours. But I must not look at her any more. She may be a badger or fox sent to tempt me."

When he returned to his cell, he invoked the aid of Kwannon, and fasted during five days in order to purify his spiritual vision.

One evening, soon after this experience, he quitted the library of the temple, in which he had been studying since sunrise, and strolled toward the mountains in the rear of the edifice.

The scene was charming, the trees being in the full beauty of the fall change, when the leaves are tinged with gold, crimson, purple, yellow, and brown, as harmonious in tone as a piece of finely woven

old brocade. As the sun set, the splendour of the heavens vied with that of the earth, and the united glory moved Saikei's soul.

"O admirable goddess!" he cried, addressing the sun; then, remembering his vows, murmured, "*Namu Amida Butsu!*"

After ascending to a ledge from which he could overlook the valley, he seated himself, and soon became forgetful of his surroundings. His meditation was presently interrupted by the cry of a deer; and upon glancing up, he saw a magnificent animal standing upon a peak near by, calling to its mate. The latter, uttering a low, joyous sound, presently emerged from a thicket, and joined its companion; who, proudly tossing its spreading antlers, darted into the forest, swiftly followed by the doe.

While the *bozu* was watching them, the sun suddenly vanished below the horizon, and darkness covered the face of nature.

Saikei, whose soul was filled with strange emotion, rose like one in a dream, and wandered down the mountain path, thinking,—

"Since the heaven and earth opened [were created], nature has been the same. Why does Buddhism war against it? I never heard a good reason for this doctrine. I have read the *Dai-sho-gon-ron* and *Uji-shini*, and everybody knows about Chokan of Shiga and Ohara. That they finally attained perfection, is certain."

The unhappy priest, taking his rosary from his sleeve, began to pray, imagining as he did so that he was walking towards the temple of Shin-gon; instead of which he presently neared Kanzaki, and beheld the thatched cottages of that village, which was quite famous as a summer-resort for wealthy persons living in the neighbouring cities.

"I will inquire the way to my temple," he thought. "If I walk very quickly, I ought to reach it in an hour."

Presently he heard the sound of a *koto* [horizontal harp], which was played very skilfully; and, hastening forward, he came to a fence enclosing a little cottage in the rear of a large restaurant.

The music filled his soul with ecstasy; and, in his anxiety to see the person who was performing, he parted the close bamboos of the fence with his fingers, and peeping through, beheld a lovely girl entertaining a noble and his guests, who were listening with rapt attention.

His heart almost stopped beating as he recognized, in the accomplished musician, the maiden he had so much admired in the temple.

He stood spell-bound, worshipping her beauty and listening to the charming air. When she ceased, he saw the guests retire, and heard the noble say,—

"Hachisuba [Lotus-leaf], you have greatly pleased me and my friends. There is a *kago* [litter] in waiting to take you home. Your father is here to accompany you."

The girl bowed her forehead to the floor, sucked in her breath, and murmured her acknowledgments; keeping a sharp lookout for the fee and presents the noble had left near the *koto*.

As soon as he had retired, she pounced upon the package, and, eagerly tearing the paper, emptied its contents into her palm, crying,—

"Only ten *rio*! But this roll of brocade is beautiful, and this elegant hand-mirror is very valuable. It is of the finest metal, and its handle is bound with silk of my five favourite colours,—a lucky omen!"

As she spoke, Saikei sneezed, and in his confusion shook the fence;

whereupon Hachisuba rose, and, descending the steps into the little garden, seized his fingers, and said in a low tone,—

"Are you a robber?"

"No, I am only a priest," he whispered. "I pray you to release me. I have to return to the temple of Shin-gon, and it is late."

"Are you the priest Saikei?" she demanded in an agitated voice.

"Yes," he replied, twisting his fingers out of hers. "Farewell!"

Once free he ran down the narrow lane, intending to escape; little thinking that at the end was a precipice he could not descend.

Hachisuba, who was oblivious of all save her admiration for the young *bozu*, re-entered the house, and, summoning two of the little girls who acted as waitresses, said,—

"I wish to give alms to the priest who has gone down the lane. Go find him, and bring him here gently."

She seated herself upon the floor near the *koto*, and, taking some grain-incense, burned it in order to make her presence fragrant.

One of the girls went after Saikei; and the other lighted the lamp in the stone lantern that stood at the rear entrance to the cottage, then hid herself behind the gate of bamboo, overgrown with crow-melon, which, with the crimson maple flirting with the evergreens, looked charming in the dim light.

In a few moments they heard the other servant say,—

"Hachisuba San desires to give you alms, so please come back with me."

"You are mistaken," he said, "I am not a begging priest."

As he spoke, he passed under the thatched gateway; and Hachisuba, who regarded him earnestly, said,—

"Honourable priest, I very much desire to speak with you."

"Yes, honourable priest," added the little girl, who still clung to his robe, and who pointed towards the singer. "Hachisuba San is very rich: she will give you plenty of money for prayers."

The children led him to the entrance of the house, and the elder said,—

"Honourable priest, put off your sandals and enter."

Saikei averted his face, murmured a prayer, and was about to rush away, when Hachisuba spoke to him, saying,—

"Why does the honourable priest hesitate, when he can save a soul from sin?"

Saikei slipped off his sandals, and, stepping into the room, was received by Hachisuba, who, offering him the place of honour before the *tokonoma*, bowed her head to the mats, drew a deep inspiration, and said,—

"A holy priest can enter even a poor place like this. I am in great distress of mind. Please give me the comfort of religion."

The *bozu*, who was kneeling, sucking in his breath, and bowing in great fright, timidly replied,—

"Come to the temple at the proper time."

Hachisuba wept until her sleeves were drenched, then sitting up upon her heels, dried her tears, and exclaimed,—

"Ah! holy priest, do you not care for my happiness in a future state! I am only as dew on the grass, in your eyes."

Saikei, who had half risen, glanced at her as at a beautiful flower, and said,—

"You are mistaken. If confessing your sins will ease your over-burdened soul, I am willing to listen to you."

Hachisuba drew nearer to him, and, pouring out a cup of *saké*, offered it, saying,—

"Drink this with me." Then she drank half of its contents.

The *bozu* muttered a prayer, and was rising to leave when she restrained him, and cried,—

"I am twenty-three years of age, and since I was sixteen have loved you in secret."

"I am a priest," he hoarsely replied.

"I know it—I know it," she passionately answered. "Drink this wine, and break your vow in this 'rented inn!' [present world]. Drink! drink! It will not poison you, but—make you human."

He felt her breath upon his cheek, for she had moved quite close to him. The cup touched his lips; he smelt its delightful perfume, then drank, and broke the vow he had made when he became a priest.

After that he dared not go back to the temple, for her face was to him more beautiful than the thirty-two physiognomies of Buddha.

"More *saké*!" he bitterly exclaimed, emptying cup after cup. "You have closed the doors of Shingon against me. Now I will marry you. Give me more *saké*!"

The girl was about to comply, when her father entered, and, seeing Saikei, said,—

"Are you not a priest of the temple near Kukuchi? I am ashamed of you!"

The poison had done its work. Saikei seized the wine-kettle, and, placing the spout to his lips, drained the vessel dry; then tossing it into the garden, cried,—

"I'll send a friend to you to arrange the marriage to-morrow, old man!"

In another moment he was fast asleep.

The girl's father sternly ordered her to place the *koto* in its case, and to hand him the money received from the noble; having done which,

he motioned her to follow, and quitted the room.

Hachisuba hastily wrote a line upon a scrap of paper, and, taking the roll of brocade and the metal hand-mirror, she hid the paper in the fabric, and placed them under the priest's head; after which, regarding him with a look of the deepest affection, she knelt, bowed respectfully, murmured "*Sayonara* [farewell]," and, rising, quickly followed her parent.

When she had departed, the landlord entered, and, shaking Saikei, said,—

"Come, holy priest, get up, and proceed upon your pilgrimage. This is not a temple."

Saikei growled like a fierce dog, and half opening his eyes, replied,—

"You have said enough! Disturb me again, and I'll—break—your—head."

"*Hai*, I understand," murmured the landlord. "This fellow is a robber in disguise. I'll allow him to sleep off the effects of the *saké*. He might do me an injury. Besides, the restaurant is closed for the night."

Saikei tossed about, like one in a fever, and his sleep was filled with dreams of Hachisuba. Sometimes she was The-deer-of-five-colours, and at others, her smiling, winning, perfumed self. Although he followed her over mountains and through forests, she always, upon his touching her, changed into a deer like the one slain by his father.

When he awoke at daybreak, the events of the previous evening flashed through his mind, and he was overcome with remorse, crying,—

"What have I done? *Namu Amida Butsu!* I am forever disgraced! I dare not return to the temple. This is a punishment for my evil deeds in a former state! Ah! ah, what shall I do? I am no longer a priest, but an outcast!"

His features were swollen, his hands trembled, his eyes were bloodshot, and his tongue as dry as dust.

As he rose from the mats, he saw the package left by Hachisuba, and, opening the letter, read,—

TO HONOURABLE PRIEST.

Forgive me for bringing you into the way of trouble, but do not take the matter to heart. All the sin is mine, and I will joyfully bear it through countless existences if I can only once more behold you in this state. You have a clear conscience, and no one will blame you. If the gods permit it, we will meet again. Meanwhile I await the moment when I shall have the supreme happiness of seeing your face. Accept these poor gifts. Farewell!

THE KOTO-PLAYER.

His tears fell as he read her communication; then taking up the presents, he pressed them to his forehead. As he did so, the landlord entered with a tray on which was a kettle of *saké* and a cup. After bowing politely, he handed the cup to Saikei, and said,—

"This is good for your complaint. I am a careful man, and never talk about my guests. If you rob any one in the neighbourhood, I will buy your plunder at a high price. The holy priest's dress is a good disguise."

"How much will you give me for this roll of brocade?" inquired Saikei.

The man, after hesitating a moment, answered,—

"Two *rio*,—although it is only worth one. It is our first transaction, and I like to show liberality. I will not charge you for your night's lodging."

Saikei accepted the gold, and from that moment, though outwardly a priest, was inwardly a demon.

This captive of love, yielding to a fate he could not control, turned his back upon Kanzaki, and, jingling his staff, started upon a pilgrimage, whither he neither knew nor cared.

CHAPTER III

SAIKEI OBTAINS AN OX UPON A FALSE PRETENCE OF
FILIAL DEVOTION

THERE is an old proverb, "The *bozu* who has broken his vow always has the temple-bell ringing in his ears." This was the case with Saikei, who, even when his heart was filled with sinful thoughts, would mechanically repeat his prayers and jingle his staff as he walked.

After quitting Kanzaki, he proceeded to the village of Takahata, where he rested at a little temple, and meditated upon his past and future; thinking,—

"I am now twenty-six years old, and my life is broken like a cup dashed upon a stone. I know that if I were to return to my temple, I could by sincere penitence, profound humility, and sitting under the waterfall, finally be re-instated in my former position, and some day attain a seat upon the 'Lotus Terrace in the Western Holy Land'!" Laughing gently to himself: "I prefer the perfumed presence of Hachisuba [Lotus-leaf]. If I can only find her, I shall, in this existence, be as near the lotus as I desire. I wonder whether I am as constantly in her thoughts as she is in mine. I will forever keep this hand-mirror—for her sake. How stupid of me not to ascertain where she lived! *Namu Amida Butsu!* Perhaps it will be best to return to my native village, and to engage in my honourable father's business. I will set out at once."

He travelled from the province of Settsu through Yamashiro into Omi, and finally reached a roadside inn overlooking Lake Biwa, where he entered a private room, and

ordered refreshments. While these were being prepared, he glanced sadly at the sparkling water, and thought,—

"I am not far from my old home, yet I dread to show my face there, —I, who vowed, I would never revisit it until I became a Living Master, and wore a brocade robe. But my purse is almost empty. What am I to do?"

At that moment two blind shampooers came along the road, and, feeling their way with their staves, presently touched the floor of the veranda in front of his room, then seating themselves, ordered hot water; and, being unaware of his presence, began to chat after the manner of their class.

The face of the elder was as wrinkled as a monkey's, and his eyes were hidden by bushy brows resembling dwarf bamboo on the edge of a precipice; while that of the younger was badly scarred from the cause that had deprived both of sight.

As they sipped their beverage, the young shampooer blinked with delight, and said,—

"Oh, it is rich news! A few days ago the Living Master of the temple of Cho-ko, where *bozu* Saikei began his studies, received a letter from the Living Master of the temple of Shin-gon, in the province of Settsu, informing him that the holy young priest—the austere, invincible pattern to all other *bozu*—had broken his vows." Placing his cup upon the tray, and rubbing his hands gleefully: "Ye, it was the old story! A little *koto*-player,

named Hachisuba, made him forget all that he had learned in fourteen years !”

Saikei “felt as though he had swallowed fire ;” but he dared not move, or the blind men would cease their conversation.

The elder shampooer smiled, and made a comical gesture with his mouth, then, refilling his cup, drained it slowly, and set it down, remarking,—

“People say he was as exalted as a tree upon a high mountain, now he has fallen into the lowest depths.” Musingly : “*Hai !* those *koto*-players can do as they like with us.”

This speech caused his companion, who was in the act of drinking, to choke with laughter ; whereupon the old man thumped him upon the back, and merrily remarked,—

“I suppose you think I cannot admire with my ears ?”

“Ah, you are too witty,” returned his companion, clapping his hands for the attendant. “I was told that when the young *bozu* of the Shin-gon temple heard of honourable priest Saikei’s disgrace, they laughed in their sleeves, and said, ‘Some trees grow too quickly to bear good fruit.’”

At that moment a waitress appeared with Saikei’s repast ; and, while she was arranging it before him upon the matted floor, the shampooers resumed their journey, blowing their whistles, and using their staves as lobsters use their feelers.

Saikei ate the food mechanically, and did not hear the chatter of the attendant, who, as she received her fee, thought,—

“I wonder whether this is the honourable priest Saikei, about whom everybody is talking.”

He wandered for several days in

the villages between Otsu and Kusatsu, begging his way ; and one morning arrived at the Yasu ferry on the Mori-yama River, where he saw a yellow-haired ox, laden with salt, licking the hands of its driver, who was resting on a pile of wood, awaiting the return of the boat.

“Why does the creature do that ?” inquired Saikei.

“It is a trick it has,” answered the man. “All animals of a gentle nature lick the hands of those who are kind to them.”

Saikei thought a while, then asked the driver the name and address of his employer ; whereupon the fellow, being an innocent rustic, replied,—

“This ox belongs to Tomosada Monoyemon, the wholesale salt-dealer in Obata on the other side of the river Yeti. I am one of his drivers, and deliver salt for him all over the district.”

At that moment the ferry-boat arrived from the opposite shore ; and the ox was dragged through the noisy crowd that was disembarking, and was presently taken on board. Saikei mingled with the passengers, and spent his last *rin* [mill] in ferriage. Upon reaching his destination, he hurried away without taking any further notice of the driver.

He inquired the way to Obata, and, as he walked, thought,—

“That foolish man has no more sense than a stone. He might know the ox licked his fingers because the latter were covered with fine salt from handling the load. I have an idea ! If I can obtain money enough, I will go to Kamakura, where I am unknown, and may find some means of getting a living.”

Towards evening he overtook an old woman going home from market ; who, frightened by his description

of the fate of those who withheld alms, gave him the pittance she had received for her wares. This enabled him to lodge at the best inn in Obata, and to eat a good meal before retiring.

The next morning he privately sent out for some salt, which he took into the bath-room, and turned into a tub. The crystals soon dissolved in the hot water; whereupon he soaked his clothes in the brine, and bathed his body, leaving the solution to dry upon him, and upon his garments, which he wrung out and hung on a fence in the rear yard. When they were ready to put on, he paid his bill, and, leaving his staff, started for Tomosada's store in the suburb of the town. The merchant, who was a prosperous man, dwelt in a well-kept house, abutting upon which was a shed filled with baskets and bales of salt, that gave out a faint odour of the sea.

Saikei approached the entrance, and, not seeing any one, said in a loud voice,—

"I am only an ignorant priest from the province of Settsu, but I have an important communication to make to the honourable master of this house."

Tomosada, who was hidden from sight in the little counting-room, rose, and, advancing, gazed at Saikei's dirty, ragged robe, then said,—

"I am the Tomosada whom you seek. For what purpose do you call upon me?"

Saikei knelt upon the ground, and bowing, began to weep, saying between his sobs,—

"Honourable sir, no wonder you regard me with suspicion, but you will not do so when you hear my story. This ignorant priest is the only son of a hunter named Amada Buhei. Fourteen years ago my

honourable father died of a strange disease, which was doubtless a punishment for his sins, he having killed many animals. To save his soul from punishment through countless existences, I became a priest, and have lately belonged to the temple of Shin-gon in Settsu. *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

Tomosada listened respectfully, but wondered what the *bozu* would say next.

Saikei, after weeping for some moments, said,—

"A month ago I had a strange dream. The spirit of my honourable father appeared to me, and said, 'My soul was taken to the hell of beasts, and as a punishment for my sins was re-born in the body of a yellow ox, in which existence I am from dawn to night daily compelled to bear heavy burdens of salt in the service of an honourable merchant of Obata, named Tomosada Monoyemon. I command you to seek that honourable man, and beg he will release me from an intolerable life.'"

After giving vent to another outburst of grief, he said in a piteous voice,—

"Although my dream may appear very strange to you, mercifully remember the grief it gives me. I did not stop to relate it to my fellow-priests, but, forgetting all else, fled from the temple, and begged my way hither, resolved to do my utmost to alleviate the misery of my honourable father's present state. *Namu Amida Butsu!* Please, honourable great master, listen to my petition. You will do a most pious and charitable act if you will liberate my parent from his misery."

Tomosada, who was greatly surprised, thought for a while, then said,—

"I have often read about these strange things in novels, but this

is the first time any one has recounted such a dream to my face. Being desirous of extending mercy to all tortured souls, I shall not, under the circumstances, regret sparing one of my oxen. When I was a child, I heard about the hunter Amada Buhei, who killed The-deer-of-five-colours, dying of a strange disease. My father bought the skin, and sold it to a *samurai* named Ihara Taketoshi, one of the retainers of Nitta Ujimichi. There are several oxen in my stable. I will have them brought out for you."

"I only desire to see the yellow one," said Saikei, still pretending to sob. "If it does not recognize me, then my dream was caused by demons."

"Kiku," cried Tomosada to his wife, "go to the stall and bring the yellow ox here. The men are all away at the festival."

A comely young woman, who had been secretly listening to their conversation, came out of a rear apartment, and, going to the stable, presently returned, leading the animal that had licked its driver's hands at the ferry.

Upon beholding the *bozu*, the creature's eyes moved uneasily, and it sniffed suspiciously; seeing which the woman retired quickly into the house, and exclaimed,—

"Now we shall learn the truth."

Saikei, who pretended to be greatly agitated, approached the ox very gently, and, kneeling, bowed respectfully and sucked in his breath, then held out his right hand, while he covered his eyes with his left, and sobbing said,—

"Honourable father, I have longed to see you! Do you not remember me? It was indeed you who appeared in my dream. Ah! my poor, tortured father, your back is all worn with carrying burdens.

How I pity you! This is a heavy punishment for your sins in your former state."

While speaking, he gradually brought his right hand under the nose of the animal, which thrust out its tongue, and began to lick his fingers.

"It cannot check the natural feelings of a parent," exclaimed Tomosada, who with folded arms regarded the proceedings with great astonishment. "This is truly a miraculous occurrence."

Kiku raised her hands, and opened them with amazement, then wept and murmured,—

"It is indeed most touching! See how the ox licks the priest's fingers! Although he has the body of an animal, he does not forget his son. What deep love has remained in his heart!"

"*Namu, namu, namu!*" said Saikei, as the beast, finding the priest's head was nicely salted, began to sniff at it vigorously. "Honourable father, if you could only use your feet as you once did your hands, you would rub my forehead" [the Japanese method of caressing a child]. "O most honourable father!"

The animal was proceeding to devour the priest's black robe, when he took it by the horns, and said to Tomosada,—

"He is beside himself with joy at once more beholding me! Honourable great master, I pray that you do not put any more heavy burdens upon my honourable father."

The merchant led the unwilling ox back to its stall, and, returning to Saikei, bowed and said,—

"Honourable priest, I beg of you to enter my humble abode.—Kiku, bring some refreshments; we must do our best to entertain such a filial son."

He ushered the *bozu* into the main room of the house, and, seating him

upon a fine cushion before the *toko-noma*, feasted him with the best food the larder afforded. When his guest's appetite was satisfied, Tomosada, taking a bag of money from his sleeve, bowed, sucked in his breath, and said,—

"Honourable priest, I beg you will accept this trifle as alms: it is offered from my heart."

Saikei drew a long inspiration, bowed very low, and, keeping a severe countenance, replied,—

"Indeed you are a most benevolent man. You will receive great benefits from this act, both in your present and future state. Such exceeding piety may enable you to obtain *Nirvana*. *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

This speech overcame both husband and wife, who felt they were purchasing a seat upon the lotusterrace very cheaply. They begged the *bozu* to excuse them for a few moments, then proceeded to the stable, and after rubbing down the ox, and exchanging its worn halter for a new one, led it round to the front of the house, where they found Saikei anxiously pacing to and fro as though impatient to start for Settsu; the truth being, he desired to get away before the drivers returned from the festival.

Upon reaching the spot where he stood, they knelt and bowed, and Tomosada said,—

"Honourable priest, please accept this possessed ox. Take it to your temple, and render the remainder of its existence happy."

The animal, in endeavouring to get at Saikei's salted robe, tugged violently at its halter, stretched its neck, and uttered a loud cry.

"*Hai!* He knows me again," said the *bozu*. "*Namu, namu, namu!*"

He folded his hands, and prayed very earnestly; keeping one eye

half opened in order to ascertain whether the drivers were coming up the road from the village.

Tomosada and his wife listened very respectfully, and, although they did not understand his prayers, were much comforted by his sonorous words and grave deportment.

He ended by repeating the formula with great rapidity; after which he received the halter, and bowing said,—

"Every blessing that Heaven can give will descend upon this house."

"See how the ox follows him, and bites his robe," said the woman. "It frisks its tail, and will, I believe, presently talk with him. *Hai!* this is a miracle!"

When the servants returned, they were told the wonderful story; but as all of them were full of *saké* they only yawned and observed,—

"*Naru hodo!* [Is that so!]"

Saikei travelled for a mile or two in the direction of Settsu, and, turning down a road upon his right, made the best of his way to Otsu, sleeping in a wood in order to avoid the questions of inquisitive landlords and servants.

He arrived at his destination about daybreak, and even at that early hour found the place crowded with buyers and sellers.

The cattle-market of Otsu was situated among the hilly ground outside the Seta ward-gate, and was a very simple affair; the animals being tethered in rude pens made of pine poles. The farmers, many of whom had come from a long distance, were accompanied by one or more city friends, or acquaintances recently made in the *saké*-shops, who, while utterly ignorant of cattle, gravely advised the rustics in making their sales or purchases.

The market-master went from group to group, receiving his fees for stalling the oxen, and the tax

upon each sale. He was a silent, solemn man ; but his *soroban* [counting-board], account-books, and official dipper were as effectual as the loudest voice.

The hairy rustics and their companions clustered round the stalls, yelling and gesticulating like crazy people, and punching the oxen as though the latter were "hide all through."

Saikei sought a middle-man, who, after ascertaining the price he was to obtain for the ox, paid the market-master's fees, and looked round for a customer.

The priest purchased some rice-cakes of a blind old woman, then made a hearty meal, washing the food down with many cups of tea, and at the same time keeping one eye upon the salesman.

About noon an honest, hungry-looking fellow approached the man, and said,—

"I would like to know the price of that yellow ox."

"Six *rio*," replied the vender.

"Too much, too much," said the other sadly.

"Five," growled the dealer.

"My purse does not hold such an amount," said the hollow-cheeked one.

"Four," snapped the commissioner.

A blind woman who was standing by chuckled and said,—

"It must be a very fine ox!"

"*Hai*, it is a holy beast," shouted a porter, who was carrying a bale filled with bowls, carefully secured with straw rope. "You know the proverb, 'Every thing grows fat in the shadow of the temple.' If I had my savings with me, I would buy it."

The anxious bargainer nervously opened his money-bag, and, emptying its contents into the vender's hand, cried,—

"Three *rio*! All I have in the world! You must pay the market-charges out of that."

The dealer compressed his lips, and replied in a grumbling tone,—

"Why do you not ask me to give it to you? Well, take it! You look hungry enough to eat the beast."

Both of the men clapped their hands, and the bargain was ratified.

After the purchaser had retired with his prize, Saikei advanced, and asked for his money, which was immediately paid him, less stallage, commission, and tax on sale. Upon receiving the coins, the priest was about to enter the ward-gate, when he heard an altercation between a tipsy farmer, the vender, and the market-master.

"I tell you, I bought that yellow ox," shouted the tiller of the soil, appealing to the official. "Thousand gods! I am not dreaming."

"He is mistaken. Is he not, honourable market-master?" pleaded the middle-man.

"Do you not see that he is drunk?" quietly replied the official, mechanically running his fingers over his *soroban*. "I never heed the speech of such persons."

At that moment the hungry man passed, leading the yellow ox.

"*Hai! Hai!*" shouted the porter. "Why do you not ride upon it?"

"Oh, what a fine creature! I envy you," remarked a merry fellow, turning about and pretending to criticise the beast. "Mind it does not swallow you on the way home."

"I tell you, I will have that yellow ox!" roared the bearded farmer. "I am not afraid of any market-master!"

"Come, Sanpei," said his hanger-on, familiarly thrusting his left hand into the rustic's sleeve, and restraining him, "let us drain a cup."

Saikei chuckled as he listened to this and to the din of hand-clapping

and shouting; then entering the ward-gate, passed leisurely down the main street of Otsu, pausing every now and again before the shops devoted to the sale of pilgrim's outfits. He finally took a seat before one, and selected a new staff, also a bamboo knapsack such as is used by travelling priests to carry sacred books. In lieu of the latter, he carefully packed away the metal hand-mirror, and filled the empty space with bottles of choice *saké*.

He next proceeded to a famous restaurant overlooking Lake Biwa, and, ordering a grand repast, ate until he felt quite contented; after which he shouldered his load, and, jingling his staff, staggered out of the place, and started along the Tokaido [eastern road] for Kamakura, alternately uttering prayers and singing absurd songs.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

There is an old proverb, "He who has neither intelligence nor moral prin-

ciples has the soul of an ox in a human body."

In the book entitled *Zendo* [Good Instruction], you will find the following passage:—

"He who is not loyal to his lord, dutiful to his parents, and is uncharitable and ungrateful, is no better than a beast of burden."

When the priest Saikei asserted that the soul of his father inhabited the body of the yellow ox, and thus defrauded the pious merchant of his property, he became more debased than the animal he stole.

I am sure that all who may read this will detest the unfilial conduct and deceitfulness of Saikei, and be more than ever desirous of serving their parents with their whole hearts. Also remember, when you lose your father and mother, to pray for them continually, that they may swiftly arrive in Paradise.

It is difficult to control a disposition to do wrong; but if you diligently strive to be good, you will succeed; or, if you persistently follow crooked courses, you will end in being a very wicked person. You must curb your evil inclinations as a rider does a colt. Do not fail to remember these things.

It is my earnest wish.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER IV

TOMOSADA, THE SALT-DEALER, SEEKS SHELTER FROM A PASSING SHOWER

THE perfect bamboo has many joints and branches; a romance, many chapters and descriptions necessary to its completeness. Although I here diverge from the main part of my story, I do so in order that the latter may be more fully understood by my readers.

On the second day of the seventh month of the first year of Riaku-o [19th July, 1338],—when the immortal Nitta Yoshisada,¹ with only

¹ For a description of Nitta Yoshisada, *vide* The Mikado's Empire, by Professor William Elliot Griffis.

fifty followers, encountered a host numbering over three thousand of the Ashikaga retainers, in a rice-field, near Fukui, in Echizen, and, after being shot between the eyes with a white-feathered arrow, like a true hero cut off his head, so that his enemies might not recognize him,—two brothers in his little band, which had melted like snow before the sun, became separated in the fray, and, taking to their heels, escaped the slaughter, and avoided the honourable death of their companions.

The elder *samurai*, Ihara Tarogo Takeyasu, fled to a place called Sokokura on the side of Mount Hakone, in the province of Sagami, where he became a farmer, and, being also skilled in training hawks, acquired a competence. The younger, Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira, afraid to meet the scorn of the world, retired to Seta in the province of Omi, where he purchased a miserable hovel, and married an amiable invalid named Motoye, who bore him two children.

At the time the priest Saikei became a thief, Takeakira, who earned a precarious existence as an ox-driver for the merchants of Otsu, had, by dint of "wasting his body" for many years, succeeded in saving three *riô*; which he intended to invest in the purchase of a pack-animal, and thus increase his income. It was he who had met the *bozu* at the market, and bought the yellow ox, which he proudly led home. He exhibited it to his wife and children, saying,—

"I have for a long time denied myself many things, that I might own such a creature. Now you, wife, can have delicacies; and later on, you, my daughter Taye, and you, my son Tajikichi, shall have warm clothes. You have taken good care of your mother, and kept house well, for which I shall reward you. I am indeed a happy man. I now have six legs instead of two."

The entire family patted and admired their new possession, and, after housing it for the night, sat down to a simple—yet to them extravagant—meal of sweet-potatoes and *katsuo-bushi* [smoked bonito].

While they were enjoying themselves, a servant, whose clothes were stained with travelling a great distance, asked for admittance; then, sucking in his breath as he bowed respectfully, handed Takeakira a letter, saying,—

"This is from my honourable master, your elder brother, Sir Ihara Tarogo Takeyasu, who lives in Sokokura in the province of Sagami."

Takeakira gazed at him in an astonished manner, and said,—

"You must be mistaken! My honourable elder brother died fighting with the great hero Nitta Yoshisada, in Echizen, many years ago."

The servant sat up, scratched his ear, and replied,—

"It is lucky to receive a letter from one whom we deem to be numbered as nobody."

"I wish I had died on that day," murmured Takeakira, as though thinking aloud. "My crane's legs carried me away from an honourable ending." After raising the letter to his forehead, he carefully cut the binding cord, and removed the epistle from the wrapper. When he had read the communication, he approached his wife, who had retired to her usual place on the mats, and, kneeling by her, said,—

"My elder brother, whom I deemed dead, has been living for many years in Sokokura. Listen to what he writes to me."

The children drew near, and, taking respectful positions, knelt with their foreheads bowed to the floor while he read,—

"Lord Kiga Jiuro Mitsusuke, a feudal chief, formerly a retainer of the great Nitta, is living in Sokokura, and I am to-day receiving his rations. Although I am not rich, I have sufficient for the wants of myself and family. Lord Kiga has lately been in the province of Settsu, upon a mission for the authorities at Kamakura, and has but this day returned home.

"During his trip he learned that you were living near Seta; and upon his arrival here, he told me of this, inquired whether I was aware of your existence, and gave me your

address. All of which was most welcome news.

"I hurriedly despatch my honest old servant, Cho-suke, with this flying letter. He will tell you all about me. Come at once to thank Lord Kiga, and see me. I am anxiously looking for you, so do not write any particulars."

When Takeakira had finished reading, he said,—

"This was undoubtedly written by my honourable elder brother; so I cannot hesitate, but must start at daybreak. Do not be uneasy about me: I shall not remain long away."

They entertained Cho-suke, and gave him a present for bringing such good news; then, not desiring to expose their poverty, asked a neighbour to shelter him for the night.

Taye and Tajikichi assisted their father to prepare for his journey; and when his scanty wardrobe was packed, he regarded them affectionately, and said,—

"You, Taye, are now fifteen years old, and having good sense can take charge of your honourable mother. You, Tajikichi, are twelve, and can be of great assistance to your elder sister. I leave your mother in your charge; also, do not neglect to feed the ox."

The children bowed, and replied as with one voice,—

"Honourable father, your commands shall be obeyed."

None of the family slept that night; the husband talking in a low tone with his wife, and the children whispering to one another and endeavouring to restrain their tears.

"I am sorry," said Taye. "But if this will be the means of restoring our honourable father to his former rank of *samurai*, we need not grieve over parting with him. Still, he is very dear to us."

"*Hai, hai*," answered her brother. "He is very dear to us."

At daybreak Takeakira went to a cupboard, and took from it an oblong box, wrapped in old brocade, the contents of which had never been seen by his family, who, in response to his invitation, approached him, knelt, and, assuming respectful positions, breathlessly awaited the opening of the package.

As he untied the cords, his hands trembled, and big tears fell upon the fabric, while those around him sobbed sympathetically.

He removed the box from its cover, reverently opened it, and disclosed two objects enveloped in red silk,—the *katana* and *wakizashi* [long and short swords worn by the *samurai*]. Having removed the wrappings, which he carefully spread upon the floor, he placed the weapons upon them, and, drawing in his breath, bowed, repeated the reverence three times, and remained with his forehead touching the mats.

He remembered the day upon which he last wore those emblems of honour; when, instead of kneeling by the body of his heroic chief, committing *hara-kiri*, and dying like a *samurai*, he had, after a stubborn fight in which he was severely wounded, fled like a deer pursued by dogs.

It was therefore only natural that he should feel remorse, and that his wife and children were profoundly affected.

After having somewhat conquered his emotion, he rose, and motioned his son to hand him the weapons; which the boy did in the proper manner, not touching them with his hands, but keeping the silk wrapped about the scabbards.

Takeakira thrust them into his girdle, feeling that once more he was a man; then quitted the house, followed by his wife and children.

Cho-suke, who was respectfully awaiting him at the gate, bowed to the ground, and remained there while Takeakira bade his family farewell.

Motoye, repressing her grief, trembled as she bowed, saying,—

“Honourable husband, there is but one day more of autumn, and it is colder than it was at this time last year. I fear the snow will be deep upon the mountains, so pray you will be careful of yourself in every way, and please do not take cold. When I think of our parting, I shall feel as I do now,—sad and miserable.”

She sobbed quietly; for a *samurai* woman, even when mortally wounded, always endeavours to conceal her pain.

Takeakira, glancing down at her, said in a gentle tone,—

“I desire that during my absence you do your utmost to recover your strength. It would give me great happiness to once more see you in good health.”

Taye and Tajikichi, who knelt behind their mother, sobbed, and said,—

“Honourable father, please return as soon as possible.”

Takeakira hoarsely bade them adieu, and walked quickly down the road, followed at a respectful distance by Cho-suke.

The last words the *samurai* heard from his dear ones were, “*Sayonara ! Sayonara !* [Farewell ! Farewell !]” which were mockingly echoed by the rocks.

I must here again branch from my main story; for what reason, the reader will soon discover.

One day, soon after Takeakira quitted his home in order to visit his brother, Tomosada, the salt-merchant, went to Otsu upon business, and while returning was caught in a shower on the long bridge of

Seta. Upon reaching the shore, he took shelter under the eaves of Takeakira’s hovel, and, keeping his body close to the wall, waited for the rain to cease.

Motoye, being unable to leave her bed, called to him, saying,—

“Although you are a stranger, I dislike to see you becoming like a wet cloth under the eaves of the house; so please enter, enjoy our poor shelter, and dry your damp garments.”

Tomosada felt very thankful, and, putting off his clogs, stepped into the only apartment, then knelt, bowed his forehead until it touched the worn-out mats, sucked in his breath, and said,—

“Honourable wife, a hundred thousand thanks! How do you know that I am not a robber?”

Motoye smiled, in spite of her pain, and gently replied,—

“We are too poor to be robbed. I fear that the rain will end in a drizzling mist. We have an old *mino* [rain-coat made of straw]. If you will accept it, you can throw it away or give it to some one upon your arrival home.”

Tomosada bowed and replied,—

“Honourable wife, please do not rob yourself. The weather is what we expect at this season. Never mind about the *mino*.”

He drank a cup of warm water, then glanced to the rear of the hovel, outside of which he saw the yellow ox tied in a temporary shed.

“This is strange!” he ejaculated, and thought,—

“Surely yonder is the animal animated by the spirit of the hunter Amada Buhei, that I gave to the *bozu* !”

Motoye, noticing his amazement, said,—

“Is that not a beautiful ox?”

The man nodded, then rose, and, quitting the hovel, went round to

where the creature was stalled, and patted it; whereupon the ox rubbed its head against his hand, as though recognizing its old master.

Tomosada, speaking in a loud voice, said to Motoye,—

"Have you lately purchased this, or have you had it a long time?"

"My honourable husband bought it a few days ago at the cattle-market in Otsu."

"Yes," said Taye. "My honourable father saved the purchase money, *rin* by *rin*, until he had enough to buy that ox. He paid three *ryo* for it."

Tomosada, whose suspicion was confirmed, did not make any reply to this speech, but, glancing up at the sky, bowed respectfully, and remarked,—

"The rain has ceased, and I have quite a distance to go before I reach my home. *Sayonara!*"

"*Sayonara! Sayonara!*" replied Motoye and her children.

The salt-merchant, who was greatly puzzled, walked hastily, and thought,—

"How can people who live in such a miserable state afford to buy an ox? I believe that rascally *bozu* is hiding there. I must consult my wife and servants about this."

When he arrived at his house, every light was extinguished; however, he called to his wife,—

"Kiku, arouse all the people. I have been shamefully cheated."

Everybody came to where he was sitting; and while he was having his feet bathed, he related his experience, whereupon all the household spoke at once, each expressing a different opinion.

When they became tired, the man who had driven the ox upon the day Saikei first saw it approached his master, knelt, and bowing very low, said,—

"Now I understand it all. When I was waiting at the Yasu ferry, a *bozu* asked me why the yellow ox licked my hands. I did not know that all oxen will do this to a man who handles much salt. That priest is the one of whom people are talking. He ran away from his temple on account of a *koto*-player. He took a hint from what he saw, and, soaking himself in brine, was enabled to defraud you of your property. Ah! the rascal! If I had been here he would not have succeeded in robbing you."

"I am no longer blind," said Tomosada. "All of you can resume your sleep. To-morrow I will attend to this matter."

The next day the merchant put on his best garments, and called upon the head man of the village; who, after hearing his story, said,—

"It is a very serious affair. You must go with me to the castle of Kwannon-ji, and report this matter."

They set out immediately, and had an audience with the chief councillor of the governor; who, after reporting the matter to his lord, ordered a chief of police and two officers to proceed to Takeakira's hovel, and arrest both him and the priest,—it being quite evident that one was as guilty as the other.

The policemen made great preparation to overcome two such desperate men. Each, in addition to his swords, carried a copper mace about three feet long, and a stout cord, and, before starting, drank many cups of *saké* to give strength to his arms.

While they were thus employed, Motoye was thinking of her husband, and chatting with her children, saying,—

"It is now ten days since your honourable father departed. I hope he has safely reached Sokokura, and

is enjoying his re-union with his honourable elder brother."

As she ended this speech, some crows perched upon the roof of the hovel began to croak in a strange, disagreeable manner; which, as every one knows, foretells bad news for the person who hears them.

Motoye, who during Takeakira's absence had not grown any stronger, began to tremble, and presently said in a faint voice,—

"When crows caw softly, something good is about to happen; but when they croak like that—Oh! it makes my heart beat quickly! I fear we are about to hear some bad news of your honourable father. I am sad, I am sad."

Taye, glancing at her brother, said,—

"Honourable mother, if you worry over everything that occurs, you will never recover. Crows always croak like that before a storm; do they not, Tajikichi?"

The boy nodded, and replied,—

"My honourable sister has read my thoughts. Honourable mother, let me make some herb-tea for you."

The children raked together the ashes in the fire-place, and, adding a few sticks to them, set an iron pot on the little pile, and waited for the water to boil. Meanwhile Motoye, alarmed by the noise of the crows, moaned pitifully, and said in a low tone,—

"I feel that I am about to change my world."

As she uttered the last word, they heard the noise of many people approaching; and presently the door was kicked open, and the head man of Seta and a chief of police, accompanied by his officers, rushed into the place, followed by a neighbour and Tomosada the salt-merchant.

The policemen, whose faces

glowed like hot iron, flourished their maces, and could scarcely refrain from using them; while their chief and the head man shouted together,—

"Where is the thief Ihara, and the wicked *bozu* his accomplice? Quick, tell us where they are hidden, or get out of the house that we may search it! We have orders to arrest them."

Taye, retreating to the middle of the apartment, dropped a kettle of herb-tea; while her brother, who in his fright had upset a cup of rice, cried,—

"Honourable head man, do you not see that our honourable mother is sick? My honourable father is not a thief!"

"No, no!" moaned Motoye, half rising, and turning her face appealingly toward the furious men. "My husband is away from home, and we have no acquaintance among the priests. He bought the ox honestly,—indeed he did! indeed he did! He is innocent of all crime."

Overcome with her effort, she placed her right hand upon her left side, and, after gasping as though in agony, rolled over upon her face, and, extending her arms, became *Hotoke* [a Buddha; or, died like a truly pious person].

The policemen, who had paced the frayed mats like wild beasts, and kicked over the poor utensils, turned and jeered at her; their chief saying,—

"What nonsense! We know how much money a man who lives in a grass hut, that must fall in the next heavy wind, could put by to purchase an ox. He pretended to be a priest in order to steal it."

"He speaks wisely," cried Tomosada, who, standing in the entrance, was unaware that Motoye was dead. "You cannot explain this

thing away. There is the ox in the stall, as evidence."

"Come!" shouted the chief of police to the willing officers. "We will see whether a few strokes will make them confess where Ihara is hidden."

Seizing Taye by her left arm, he thrust his mace between his teeth, and, taking the cord from his girdle, proceeded to bind her; while one of his followers, striking Motoye savagely with his mace, yelled,—

"Rise, you lazy woman!"

"Ah! I am sorry!" sobbed the affrighted Taye. "Please spare my younger brother!"

"I have a cord with which to tie the boy," said the head man of Seta. "Give him a good stroke."

"*Oya—Oya!* [exclamation of surprise]. What are you going to do?" cried the lad, as in response to the command a policeman seized him by the neck, and began to belabour him with his heavy mace. "You are making a great mistake. My father has not eaten the wind [run away]."

The boy's speech was soon silenced by the blows rained upon him.

In the midst of the din, the neighbour who had bravely ventured in, and was standing appalled near the fire-hole, bowed politely, and said in a loud, firm voice,—

"*Moshi!* [say!] you must be more gentle with that sick woman and those tender children! *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

He had no opportunity for further expostulation, being felled by a

back-handed blow of a mace wielded by one of the excited officers.

It took the latter but a short time to silence the unfortunate inmates, and throw them into the road in front of the house; after which they tore up the worn-out mats, broke everything left undamaged in the hovel, and, having failed to discover either Takeakira or the priest, secured the ox, and returned to Motoye and her children. They found Taye and Tajikichi weeping over her body, and moaning,—

"What shall we do, now you have departed? Ah! honourable mother! Ah! honourable mother!"

The drunken chief of police, who had less pity than a tiger, shouted,—

"She was more delicate than I thought; still she may be only acting like a fox.—You, head man of the village, will watch by her. You, Tomosada, will come with us, leading the ox. And you, officers, bind these cubs, and bring them along to the castle of Kwannon-ji."

"*Namu, namu, namu!*" said the unhappy Taye. "O my honourable mother, you have become *Hotoke!*—Officers, beat me, but please spare my younger brother!"

"You cowards!" shouted Tajikichi. "Why do you strike my honourable elder sister, and not this boy? Are you afraid of my vengeance hereafter?"

When the procession reached the castle, Taye and her brother were both unconscious.

CHAPTER V

LIKE A MOUNTAINOUS SNOWDRIFT ON THE
TOKAIDO [EASTERN ROAD]

TAKEAKIRA, guided by the old servant Cho-suke, breasted the snow-storms in the mountain regions, and in due time arrived at Sokokura in the province of Sagami, where he was warmly welcomed by his brother Takeyasu. After respectfully sucking in their breath, and bowing to each other, the elder said,—

"You are aware that while I neither possess your literary nor military skill, I know something about falconry, and that now, with many other happy persons, I am living under the kind protection of Lord Kiga. When I heard of your unfortunate state, I thought how hard you must have struggled to provide for your family, and I was deeply grieved. I suppose Cho-suke has told you how my wife died some time ago, and that, though I am over fifty years old, I have never adopted an heir?"

"*Hai!*" answered his brother. "I have heard of your having lately married a young woman."

"Yes," continued Takeyasu, "last month, Lord Kiga, who felt great sympathy for my loneliness, brought me a wife from Settsu. She was the daughter of one of Nitta's old retainers, and was quite celebrated as a *koto*-player. My benefactor presented her father with a large sum of money, to recompense him for the loss of her services. His kindness is like the wide ocean."

Takeakira, who highly appreciated the great honour conferred by Lord Kiga, bowed profoundly, and said,—

"Honourable brother, you are

indeed a most fortunate man in having a wife to wait upon you in your old age."

Takeyasu smiled and bowed, then called in a loud voice,—

"Here, Hachisuba [*Lotus-leaf*], come and be introduced to my younger brother, who has just arrived from Omi."

His wife carefully adjusted her costume; then, pushing back the sliding door that separated the apartment from her own, entered the room, knelt behind her husband, bowed, and, drawing in her breath in the most correct fashion, simpered, and said,—

"I have had the good fortune to become the wife of your honourable elder brother. It therefore gives me great happiness to witness your meeting after such a long separation. Please accept my respectful congratulations."

Takeakira glanced at her out of the corners of his eyes, and thought,—

"Hachisuba—Hachisuba? She must be the *koto*-player who bewitched a young priest named Saiki! I heard the story just before I quitted home."

He did not communicate his suspicion to his brother, but, bowing his acknowledgments of her salutation, said,—

"I am glad to find you in perfect health; may you continue to enjoy it!"

The day was spent most pleasantly; Takeyasu being very happy in once more seeing his brother, and Hachisuba desirous of making a good impression upon her relative.

When Takeakira retired for the night, he thought, "I am much perplexed. I have heard that this Hachisuba greatly admired the *bozu* Saikai. Such an idea is scandalous! No good woman would think of it! Ah, I fear some trouble will result from Lord Kiga's kindness. I will watch her."

Hachisuba, who was also much annoyed, remained awake, thinking,—

"When my honourable father sold me to Lord Kiga, I dutifully obeyed, and have endeavoured to be a model wife to my honourable husband. But his brother has heard of my history,—how deeply I have loved the handsome *bozu*. Demons must have brought Takeakira hither to disturb my calm existence. I will ascertain what he knows about me. I noticed that he drank *saké* as though he had not tasted it for some time. I will keep both my eyes wide open. Ah! this is a very hard world for women. Although men can do as they please, we must do exactly as they will."

She wept silently, until her sleeves were saturated with her tears.

The next day Takeyasu presented his brother with a suit of clothes, and took him to the residence of his feudal lord, Kiga Jiuro Mitsusuke.

They were conducted into an apartment next to a reception-room, containing the bows and arrows used in archery; then a *sambo* [stand] was brought, upon which Takeyasu placed some long strips of *noshi* [seaweed, presented as an offering upon such occasions].

The elder brother knelt upon the left, and Takeakira near a screen three mats from him; after which an attendant pushed back the sliding doors, and the visitors beheld Lord Kiga, who was kneeling "as motionless as a god" in the inner room.

A sword-bearer, who knelt upon the right, holding his chief's *katana* erect, with the scabbard wrapped in a silken cloth, bowed, and demanded the names of the visitors, then announced them to his chief.

Takeyasu, who sucked in his breath and bowed with nervous rapidity, said,—

"We approach your lordship's honourable presence with fear and trembling."

"*Hai!*" added Takeakira. "But for your great kindness, we brothers would have remained unaware of each other's existence. We owe our present happiness to your lordship."

This pleased the noble, who, after slightly inclining his head, said,—

"You are both *samurai*; and, although you have been *ronin*, one tilling the ground and the other driving oxen, I, having accepted the elder as a retainer, must do the same for the younger. Bring your wife and children here; and, though I am only a small feudal chief, I will assist you to the best of my ability."

The overjoyed men endeavoured to speak, but could only bow their thanks, and shed tears.

When they were dismissed, they returned to the elder brother's house, feeling like prisoners whose crimes had been pardoned.

Hachisuba greeted them very respectfully, and did her utmost to win the good opinion of Takeakira. But he was very cold and distant toward her, and she could not find a moment in which to converse with him alone; his time being spent in pilgrimages to the Gongen of Izu and Hakone, where "he worshipped for his happiness." He also visited several historical places made famous by the heroic deeds of Nitta Yoshisada, who had many times encountered the Hojo in that region. These

scenes caused Takeakira to feel very sad, remembering as he did the heroic death of his leader; and, had he been alone in the world, he would probably have ended his life.

Upon the sixth day of his residence with his brother, he thought,—

“How the year is passing! There are only a few days left. I wonder whether Motoyeha has gained strength. Taya and Tajikichi are doubtless becoming anxious about my return. I must start like a flying arrow, at daybreak to-morrow.”

When he spoke of his intention to his brother, the latter said,—

“Rest here for a few days more. I have not yet had a feast prepared in your honour. Although I do not desire to keep you from your wife and children, allow me to give you a good dish of wild duck, which will strengthen you for your journey.”

“My honourable husband speaks wisely,” said Hachisuba, bowing, and drawing in her breath respectfully. “He is very skilful in rearing, treating, and training hawks, and is the sole possessor of the wonderful secret revealed, in a dream, by Yakushi Butsu [Buddha the medicine-master] to Haru Yori, a celebrated falconer who lived in the reign of the Mikado Kuasan.”

“Yes,” said Takeyasu. “I know an herb of which a paste can be made that will heal any wound and cure any disease of hawk or falcon. This knowledge I have never imparted to anyone, but you shall some day learn it. I, being chief falconer to Lord Kiga, who owns many fine hawks, have become quite expert with them. Last autumn his lordship was so pleased with my services that he presented me with a beautiful bird, the feathers of which are covered with white spots; so I named it Mountain-of-Snow. It has learned readily, and we are

now like master and servant. To-morrow I will give it a few hours’ exercise, and catch some ducks for you.”

At daybreak the next morning, he took Mountain-of-Snow upon his wrist, and a dog for a guide, then started with his servant for the base of the mountain, where he knew they would find some ducks in the ponds that received the watershed.

When Takeakira learned that his brother had departed, he quitted the house, and went to the temple of Hakone, before which he knelt and prayed that his wife might be freed from her disease, and his children remain strong and healthy.

He was so absorbed in his petitions that he failed to observe how the sky was darkening, and that large flakes of snow were beginning to fall with a fluttering motion. When he arose, he beat his numbed arms upon his body, and, glancing down into the valley, murmured,—

“Thinking of home, my soul has travelled there! *samui, samui!* [cold, cold.]”

As he retraced his steps, he noticed that some of the snow-clad rocks resembled tigers or lions made of silver, and that the branches of the trees looked as though laden with cherry-blossoms out of season. Mountain and valley appeared like a scene in the magic world, and he lingered in order to enjoy the view. However, he soon had enough to do to keep on his hat and straw overcoat, and, when he faced the storm, was compelled to close both eyes.

After struggling for two hours, he reached his brother’s house, where he was welcomed by Hachisuba, who, in spite of the weather, ran out to the gate, and, shaking the snow off his garments, said in a joyful tone,—

"I am so glad you have returned safely! Come in quickly! I have prepared plenty of hot water for your feet, and some warm *saké* which you must drink instantly. Come in, please come in at once!"

Takeakira motioned to her to discontinue aiding him, then sternly demanded,—

"Has my honourable brother arrived?"

"No, but I am certain that he is all right."

"Then keep the hot water for him," he growled. "A wife should first think of her husband's comfort."

"There is sufficient for ten men," said his sister-in-law. "Come, be pleased to use this."

His limbs being half frozen, he reluctantly accepted her offer; and, as he seated himself, he smelt the perfume of the *saké*, which was warming in a kettle filled with hot water.

He sniffed at it once or twice, and, although he felt angry with Hachisuba, his features gradually relaxed; noticing which, she noiselessly retired, and presently re-entered with a tray on which were some broiled salmon, chop-sticks, and two cups.

"Please take some slight refreshment," she urged, kneeling and preparing to serve him.

"I will await my honourable brother's return," he angrily answered, rising and taking his long sword from the mats. "I know of your devotion to that rascal of a priest! You cannot blind me with your flattery. I would like to cut off your head!"

His loud and threatening voice scared a crow that was perched on a basket tied to a pole outside [the sign of the house], and caused the bird to start in a hurry, cawing loudly as it flew over the roof; but it did not disturb Hachisuba, who,

filling a cup with *saké*, turned to him, and, after partly emptying it, calmly replied,—

"Honourable relative, you surely do not believe all the stories of the bath-houses and tea-booths? Please drink this."

"I believe what I have heard about you!" he angrily retorted, striking the cup out of her hand, and sending it spinning into the fire-hole. As it alighted upon the ashes, the latter flew all over her face and hair; and Takeakira said, in a low, threatening tone,—

"You are fair to look at, but are as deceitful as a mountainous snow-drift on the Tokaido. Now I warn you: If that priest ever comes here, and you so much as glance at him out of the corners of your eyes, I will not spare you! I shall return from Omi in the spring."

At that moment they heard Takeyasu, who, exhausted with his struggle against the storm, was waiting at the gate in order to regain breath before entering his home, and was coughing in a painful manner. No old man who has a young wife cares to show that age is telling upon him.

"Respect my words!" said Takeakira in a low tone, as he retired from the room.

Takeyasu made an effort, and, advancing to the house, shook the snow off his hat and garments, and seated himself on the veranda, expecting his wife would come forward to welcome him and take off his straw coat; but she remained by the fire-hole in the reception-room, mumbling to herself, and weeping silently. This puzzled her husband, who, after removing his own garments, and having had his feet bathed in hot water by Chosuke, handed Mountain-of-Snow to the latter, and ordered him to retire, saying,—

"Tell the cook to prepare the ducks for my brother's entertainment."

When he entered the house, Hachisuba did not notice his presence, but remained huddled up near the fire-hole. He approached the spot, and, squatting by her side, warmed himself, and waited for her to speak.

After a while his brother, dressed for a long journey, came from an inner room, and kneeling, bowed, sucked in his breath, and respectfully said,—

"I am glad my honourable elder brother has returned safely. I hope you enjoyed good sport. Since I saw you yesterday, I have been tormented with thoughts of my wife and children. Please excuse my abrupt departure. I will be here with them in the spring."

Takeyasu returned his salutation, and replied,—

"It is only natural that you should think of your family, but your going so suddenly surprises me. Night will soon close, and it is snowing furiously. Why not wait till the storm ceases, and start at daybreak to-morrow?"

Takeakira listened with bowed head, then said,—

"The delay of an hour is a loss of a *ri* [two and a half miles]. When I think of my wife and children, a day seems as long as a thousand autumns. Although it is growing dark, I can go four or five *ri* to-night; so, honourable brother, please excuse my sudden change of mind, and permit me to set out on my journey."

Takeyasu, pointing towards the kitchen, in which the ducks could be seen, answered,—

"Although I have braved the snowstorm to secure those birds, I will not endeavour to conquer your resolve. The year is drawing

to a close. I pray that you may arrive at home safely, and find all your family well. I am now over fifty, consequently an old man, and, being childless, desire to see my niece Taya and nephew Tajikichi. Lord Kiga is exceedingly benevolent. You must not fail to come and live here in the spring."

Takeakira bowed very respectfully, and thanked his brother for all his kindness, adding,—

"You are very honest, but all the world is not like you. Remember the old saying: 'A young wife is often careless of her husband's property; and, if she be not strictly governed, her mismanagement will bring contempt upon him.'"

Takeyasu nodded and said,—

"I thank you sincerely. I understand, though it is still snowing, you will not remain here to-night. Take old Cho-suke with you as far as your first resting-place."

"A hundred thousand thanks," answered Takeakira. "Cho-suke is a man like ourselves. He has been out with you all day, and I should be heartless to trouble him now. Farewell, honourable elder brother!"

He bowed respectfully, and, rising, accompanied by Takeyasu, went into the porch; where he slipped his feet into his straw sandals, knotted them tightly, and, gathering the string of his *mino*, put on his wide straw hat, and said in a loud voice,—

"*Sayonara!*"

"*Sayonara!*" echoed his brother, and all the household excepting Hachisuba, who remained by the fire-hole muttering and sobbing to herself.

Takeyasu watched him out of sight, then retiring to the fire, presently said,—

"What is the matter with my wife? You appear to be greatly disturbed."

Hachisuba moved nearer to him, and, prostrating herself upon the mats, wept hysterically.

"Why are you thus disturbed?" he demanded, "As long as you cry, I shall remain ignorant of the cause. Speak out. Do not mind the presence of Cho-suke."

His wife conquered her emotion, and, sitting up, said,—

"Your younger brother insinuated that I was careless with your property. He is a hateful ox! After you left the house this morning, he stole a jar of *saké* which I put out to warm for you when you returned from hawking. I was scolding him when he heard you cough. See where he threw wood-ashes over me, when I advised him to stop drinking. If he thought of his family, he would not behave like that, and steal. Oh! you are as different from him as snow is from charcoal. I do not believe he will ever return. If he does, with such a 'thick skin on his face,' you ought not to receive him in the house."

Takeyasu, having thought for a moment, laughed very loudly, and said,—

"My brother is unused to *saké*. He only joked with you. Do not trouble yourself any further. I shall treat his offence as though it had never occurred."

Hachisuba sank upon the mats, and moaned, then suddenly sitting up, exclaimed,—

"In all things you are a coward! Even your younger brother openly insults you! He has learned that I was a *koto*-player, and is enraged because I have married a *samurai*! How can I forget his provocation?"

She repeated this many times, which greatly annoyed her husband, who finally coaxed her into a good humour by promising to buy her a silver hair-pin. After she had received this, she never referred to Takeakira, and appeared to have entirely forgotten his existence; while the truth was, she feared him more than any one in the world.

A deceitful tongue will part relations more quickly than a sword will cut off a head.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

If a woman who is neither clever nor beautiful be gentle, honest, and true, she will be esteemed as highly as those "whose faces and forms are as lovely as the flowers." It is of the first importance that we all lead lives free from reproach; so that, after we have changed our state, no calumny lives behind us to grieve our friends, and cast a shadow over our memory.

Please do not forget this.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER VI

TAYE AND TAJIKICHI FACE DEATH IN ORDER TO SHIELD THEIR FATHER

WHILE Takeakira was braving the snowstorms of the great Eastern road, his children were heroically confronting the terrors of justice.

When they arrived at the castle of Kwannon-ji, the policemen placed

heavy wooden collars about their necks, and they were thrust into the prison. Upon recovering her senses, Taye sobbed and said,—

"I am grieved when I think of our honourable father. If the

officers lay their hands upon him he will be tortured and severely punished for a crime of which we know he is innocent. We must defend him at any risk to ourselves."

"Yes. We must not mind what is done to us," answered Tajikichi. "Better die the worst death than betray our honourable parent."

They bowed their heads to the floor, and wept, and prayed for their honoured mother, who was lying cold and neglected, at the mercy of animals and thieves, in their miserable home; their subdued sobs causing the prisoners in the adjoining cells to pity them, and to murmur "*Namu!*" on their behalf.

The next day their arrest was reported to Lord Sasaki; whereupon the latter directed Sir Yamada Nobujiro Norimichi, one of his councillors, to try them, and, if necessary, to use extreme measures in order to extort the truth.

During the hour of the Dragon [8 to 10 A.M.], they were summoned by the chief executioner and his assistant,—each of whom wore one sword,—and were conducted into a yard into the rear of Sir Yamada's residence, and bidden to kneel in a certain place; after which the chief squatted upon their left, and his aid upon their right, and they awaited the appearance of the judge, who presently entered a reception-room overlooking the enclosure.

The councillor, who was a handsome man about thirty years old, knelt upon the mats, and after being saluted by the prisoners and the attendants, read the memoranda of the case supplied by the depositions of Tomosada, the head man of Yeti, and the chief of the police; then said to the children,—

"Whither has your father fled?"

"Honourable judge, we know not," Taye respectfully and gently replied, sucking in her breath, and

bowing very low. "My honourable father has an acquaintance somewhere in Mutsu [Northern Japan], but I cannot tell you where. Of one thing we are as certain as of our lives: my honourable father is not a thief."

"My honourable elder sister speaks correctly," said Tajikichi, bowing his sad face to the ground. "It is all true."

Sir Yamada, who secretly admired their filial piety and courage, cross-questioned them for two hours; at last he regarded them sternly, and said,—

"Such stories will not save your parent. I will give you one day, during which you can think over the matter. If you remain stubborn you will be compelled to confess where your father is hidden."

Although both of them understood the full significance of this threat, they, being *samurai* children, calmly heard the decision; and, when they were dismissed, bowed respectfully to the judge, who remained kneeling upon the mat, and thinking,—

"These little ones are both gentle and well-behaved; but the offspring of robbers are often, like their parents, very deceitful. This is a most disagreeable duty; yet I must not swerve one hair's-breadth, even though my bosom is torn asunder with pity."

The prisoners were returned to their quarters, where, though encumbered with the heavy collars, they behaved most politely to the jailers and to one another, and passed their time in invoking the holy name of Kwannon Satta, and praying that their father might be delayed, and they have the privilege of suffering in his stead.

Whenever there was a sound outside, such as the arrival of visitors at the main gate of the

castle, these devoted ones would tremble like persons walking upon thin ice, and whisper to one another—

“The gods forbid that our honourable father has been captured!”

Upon the following morning, they were again conducted into the presence of Sir Yamada, who regarding them sternly said,—

“Will you now confess, or must I use unpleasant means to move your stubborn tongues?”

The prisoners, who saw the instruments of torture around them, bowed, and drew in their breath, respectfully; then Taye said,—

“Honourable judge, though you take my life, I cannot tell you where my honourable father is. I am willing to bear any punishment, but I pray you will spare my younger brother.”

“No, no, honourable judge!” pleaded Tajikichi. “Our honourable father is innocent; and even if we are tortured we cannot tell falsehoods about him. I would rather die. Please do anything to me, but spare my honourable elder sister.”

“They are wonderfully filial,” thought the judge. “Of course they know where their father is. Would that I could spare them, but—it cannot be!”

He gave the signal to the executioner, seeing which the assistant bared the prisoners’ backs, and the split bamboo was presently cutting the air and their tender bodies.

After many strokes had been administered, they were ordered to kneel, and face the judge, when the latter said,—

“I am ready to hear what you have to say.”

Both of them bowed, and, raising their pale faces, respectfully answered as before, each endeavouring to shield the other from punishment.

Sir Yamada, knowing that further

clemency was useless, and that he must do his duty, signalled to the executioners to proceed.

Taye was tied to one end of the ladder, and her brother to the other; and both were compelled to drink from the wooden dipper until their bodies were painful to behold.

This torture was continued at intervals, for many days; but, notwithstanding the pain and degradation, the children remained as dumb as stones, and though their bodies resembled bruised reeds, their spirits were like steel.

Even the grim executioner, who usually enjoyed his work, averted his face as he mechanically poured the water down their throats; and his bearded assistant, remembering his own children, murmured,—

“Too pitiful! Too pitiful!”

Their filial piety, heroism, dignity, and gentleness, under the terrible ordeal, so moved their judge that he ordered them to be returned to their quarters and specially watched.

Seeking an audience with his lord, he reported what he had done, as follows:—

“I have recently, as directed, tried the children of Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira, to discover whither their father has fled, and if he be guilty of stealing the ox. I have never witnessed such truly filial devotion, and cannot believe they are the offspring of thieves. Indeed I doubt if their father stole the ox. That was the work of a renegade priest named Saikei. If such honourable conduct as these little ones practise is punished with death, the gods will become angry, and visit our country with some terrible calamity. This is so! This is so!”

The governor listened attentively, and replied,—

“They are indeed to be pitied.”

Sir Yamada bowed, and continued,—

"Under these circumstances, I beg you will mercifully order me to release the children, and give them an opportunity to finish their duty by paying their last respect to their dead mother."

"You may do so," replied Lord Sasaki. "Let them go home and bury their parent. But I charge you to look out for their father. Even though he be not the thief, he is the person who received the animal from the priest. Now, Yamada, do not neglect this case."

The councillor bowed profoundly, and retired to his residence. He summoned the prisoners, informed them of his lord's mercy, and sent them back to Seta feeling as though they were walking in a dream.

They reached the hovel about midnight, and upon trying the gate they found it secured with large nails. However, they soon effected an entrance through the ruined bamboo fence, when they beheld a scene that moved their hearts, and caused them to moan with grief.

The full moon revealed the ruin made by the elements, and showed that even poverty and death had not been respected by the thieves, who had entered and stripped the place; not even sparing the fearful object lying, half covered with snow, in the centre of the room, upon which the light shone through the bare rafters.

At first the children "could not find their tongues;" but after a while, making a great effort, Taye whispered,—

"Can—that—be—our honourable mother?"

As the sorrowing ones advanced, the rats scampered off and ran through the broken places in the walls.

"This is indeed our honourable parent," presently replied Tajikichi.

"Ah! Ah! the snow is her only garment."

They wept "as though their eyes would melt," and reverently removed the drift, then, rubbing the body, sobbed and murmured,—

"We are sorry! We are so sorry!"

Sensible little Taye, somewhat conquering her grief, said,—

"Tajikichi, it is useless to weep: our tears will not change this dreadful sight. Come, we must bury our honourable mother, and not vex her soul by apparent neglect."

Heedless of the cold, she stripped off her outer garment, and, aided by her brother, tenderly covered the body; after doing which, they knelt by it, and repeated prayers.

When these were concluded, Taye said,—

"Why were we born? The seven gods have forsaken us. Look at our honourable mother's body! She has been dead twenty days, and we have been unable to bury her. I have heard, that even when a holy priest performs service for the departed, and the released soul is guided to the other world, the spirit remains in the sky forty-nine days. How will it be with your spirit, O honourable mother? You died under torture, and your children cannot even so much as place a branch of *shikimi* [evergreen] upon your body."

"The dead cannot speak," said Tajikichi between his sobs.

"That is true," sorrowfully replied his sister, "but our honourable mother can come to us in our dreams."

The girl, who gradually became frantic with grief, approached nearer to the body, and, bowing her head to the floor, cried,—

"O honourable mother! I am your unhappy daughter Taye, also Tajikichi is here. Listen to us,—

oh, listen to us ! for our bosoms are torn asunder. The priests say 'the relation of parent and child ends with each state in this world,' but surely that cannot be. We are filled with sorrow at being separated from you. The gods and Buddha have averted their faces, and the world is dark to us. We would prefer to have died at the hands of the executioner, rather than to behold you thus. This is indeed an unhappy world. May you soon reach the holy land of paradise !"

As she ceased to speak, the bell of a distant temple rang sadly as though in sympathy with them ; then her brother said,—

"Honourable elder sister, if you die of grief what will become of me ? Let us thank the gods that our honourable father is in safety. This thought must comfort our honourable mother."

He turned, approached the body, and, respectfully smoothing the hair over the temples, continued,—

"When you were in this world, O honourable mother, I often disobeyed you, for which I sincerely beg your pardon. I have been a very bad son ! *Namu, namu, namu !*"

At last Taye, remembering they were too poor to purchase a coffin, and employ a priest to say prayers, roused herself and said,—

"There is in the stable an old tub, that no one would steal. Let us place our honourable mother in it, and bury her before the neighbours rise. Conquer your sorrow for a while, and assist me in this matter."

The tub was so worn that it would scarcely hold together : however, unskilled as they were in such matters, they reverently raised the remains, and contrived to pack them in the receptacle ; having accomplished which, the girl of fifteen and boy of thirteen procured

a bearing-pole and supporting-sticks, and, thrusting the former through the grass ropes, lifted the heavy object, and started for a hilly place on the outskirts of the village.

The moon was still shining when these fragile ones staggered along the street, followed by the neighbours' dogs howling like wolves.

As they rested near the ward-gate a travelling priest passed them ; but though he turned and said "*Namu Amida Butsu !*" he did not offer any other aid, thinking,—

"It is not worth wasting one's time on people who have to be buried at night in that fashion."

"Honourable sister, I am ready to proceed," said Tajikichi, whose heart beat fast with excitement and his violent exercise. "Indeed I am not tired."

Up, up, up, among the hills, toiled the dutiful children until they reached a tree, beneath which some animal had scratched a hole that the winter storms had enlarged.

"This will do," said Taye, as they gently lowered their burden into the cavity. "Our honourable mother will rest here as peacefully as in the temple cemetery."

After filling the aperture with stones, they threw a few handfuls of earth upon the mound, and, breaking some branches from a fir-tree that grew near by, set them up on the right and left of the grave ; then kneeling by it, clasped their hands palm to palm, and offered their tears in lieu of holy-water, Taye saying for both,—

"Although you, honourable mother, were very merciful and benevolent all your life, and never committed a sin, you enjoyed little happiness, and died an unnatural death. Even if it were the result of bad deeds done in a former state we still must grieve. Now

that you are under the shadow of the tall grasses, rest peacefully, and do not be anxious about our honourable father. Be assured we will save him, even at the risk of our own lives. Please forget the sorrows of this world! May your soul attain a seat upon the lotus terrace in the Western Holy Land!"

Then brother and sister repeated the invocation to Buddha.

The moon had set, and the place was shrouded in the darkness that precedes the dawn; therefore the children did not notice the approach of two persons, one from the east and the other from the west.

The former was a *samurai*, handsomely dressed and of noble bearing; and the latter a traveller, who had evidently come from a long distance. Neither saw the other, but each quietly hid himself behind a neighbouring tree, where he could hear what the children said.

After repeating many prayers, Taye rose, and addressed her brother as follows:—

"Tajikichi, although you are younger than I am, when every one abandoned us you took as much care of me as an elder brother, for which I am grateful. Remembering, even after all we have undergone, if our honourable father returns, he will surely be made to suffer, I do not feel that I belong to this world; so, after writing down that I am the thief who stole the ox, I will join our honourable mother under the shadow of that tree. Before our honourable father reaches home, he will hear people talking about this, and so escape from further trouble. Now, brother, start for Hakone, and tell him what has occurred. Always obey him, my good brother. Please turn, and let me tie your belt tightly; then set out at once upon your journey."

Tajikichi listened and replied,—

"No, no, honourable elder sister! It is I who will acknowledge the theft, and you who must go to Hakone."

A loving contention followed as to which should have the privilege of dying for their parent; they finally determining to quit the world together.

The hidden spectators listened with great attention, both being affected to tears, grinding their teeth, and grasping the muscles of their arms with their fingers.

The day soon dawned sufficiently for the children to see the outlines of objects, when Taye, dipping her finger in some black mud, wrote a full confession of their crime upon the trunk of a tree that had been stripped of its bark by lightning. Then they sucked in their breath, as they bowed to each other, and, after securing their belts to a stout branch, made nooses in the lower ends of the improvised ropes, and, inserting their heads, prayed; Taye presently saying,—

"Buddha knows our hearts! We regret shaming our parents by leaving a bad reputation behind us, but this is doubtless our reward for crimes in a former existence. We do this to save our honourable father, and we beseech Buddha to lead us to the lotus terrace where our honourable mother is seated."

Both glanced toward the distant Lake Biwa, which, covered with patches of snow and ice, looked as cold and cheerless as the river of death; noticing which, they began to repeat "*Namu*" for the last time before stepping from the high roots and tightening the death-cords.

At that instant the handsome *samurai* stepped forward, and, raising his hand authoritatively, cried,—

"Wait a moment!"

As he did so, the traveller, who also wore two swords, emerged from his hiding-place, but, on seeing the other, halted as though dumb with amazement, and remained unnoticed.

"Who asks us to stop when we are about to do our duty?" demanded Taye, whose body was as cold as though she had already delivered her apparel to Sandzu-nobaba [the old woman who receives garments at the river of death]. "I respectfully beg that you will not interrupt us."

"I am Yamada Nobujiro Norimichi, who recently tried you by order of Lord Sasaki," replied the *samurai*. "Have you so soon forgotten me? Feeling uneasy about you, I rose in the night, and followed you here, learning of your destination from a travelling priest. My tears have fallen unbidden at your prayers and confessions of filial desire to sacrifice yourselves in order to save your father. Such conduct is unfortunately too rare. If you die as you desire, my lord would feel disgraced. You must live; I will befriend you."

Taye and Tajikichi gazed upon each other, thinking it was "a dream that had not ended;" then removing their heads from the nooses, descended to where he stood, and, bowing, sucked in their breath, and said,—

"Honourable judge, will you also save our father?"

These words caused the traveller to bite his lips, and grasp his arms, while the tears coursed down his anxious face. Advancing with a quick step, he was about to speak, but his emotion paralyzed his tongue, and he could only utter a moan; hearing which, Sir Yamada and the children glanced at him, and brother and sister simultaneously thought,—

"Ah! You are our honourable father!"

They feared to bring trouble upon him, so checked their exclamations, and, though their bosoms were torn asunder with sorrow, glanced coldly at him, as though he were a stranger.

This completely unmanned the traveller, who sobbed convulsively, and said to the councillor,—

"I am Ihara Jirojirō Takeakira, the father of these children. I have been in Sagami to see my honourable elder brother, Takeyasu, from whom I have long been separated. On my way home, I met a neighbour bound to Isé, who told me what has occurred during my absence. I have run like a hare to aid my boy and girl. I reached this spot a short time ago, and overheard their filial words. As I was about to save them, you appeared; so I waited to hear your name. How can I thank you?"

He began to relate how he bought the ox, when Yamada sternly interrupted him, saying,—

"You, traveller, listen to me. The father of these children was a poor wretch, not worth a *rin*, who drove oxen for a living. I see by your swords that you are a *samurai*, so you cannot be their parent. There are doubtless other persons of your name in this province. If the thief Takeakira comes this way, he will be arrested and punished by order of my lord; therefore, if he really desires to clear his good name, he had better discover the whereabouts of the rascally priest."

Takeakira, who, like Taye and Tajikichi, was bewildered by this speech, was about to repeat his statement, when Sir Yamada checked him, saying,—

"When a man influenced by natural love for his offspring accuses himself of a misdeed, he is not believed, for he would rather be cut to pieces than betray them. You know the old proverb, 'Love for his

children makes many a man dumb.' I do not desire to talk with such a crazy person as you are.—Come, Taye and Tajikichi, it is no crime for you to be ignorant of your parent's whereabouts. I will take care of you until the time arrives for you to vindicate your honourable father."

His voice was drowned by the sobbing of Takeakira and the children, who regarded one another as if they were on the opposite banks of a wide river.

After a while, Sir Yamada gently led the son and daughter towards his home, but he did not check their natural desire to look back, or hasten their tardy feet; they quitting the spot as though leaving behind a precious treasure.

The traveller remained with his face towards them until they vanished into the valley; then, overwhelmed with grief, passionately exclaimed,—

"You are most dutiful children!"

When he succeeded in overcoming his emotion, he knelt before his wife's grave, and prayed for her happiness and repose; after which he rose, glanced in the direction taken by Taye and Tajikichi, and said,—

"I will not grieve about parting with you. Sir Yamada is a true *samurai*! I will follow the track of that wicked priest as a hound follows a wild beast. He has killed my

wife, and separated me from my family. I hate him! Oh, I hate him! Fortunately I remember his appearance."

Thus speaking, he checked a sob, and, bowing towards his wife's grave, set out in quest of Saikei. He spent many months in moving from place to place, and questioning all whom he met as to the whereabouts of his enemy, until his last coin was gone; when, making up his mind to consult his brother, he turned his face towards Sokokura.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

The conduct of Taye and Tajikichi is worthy of our greatest admiration, being animated by the true spirit of filial devotion; their patient, dignified bearing under torture gaining the esteem even of their judge and the jailers.

These true hearts overcame all obstacles, and were permitted the happiness of burying their honourable mother's remains, while their heroic effort to save their father by sacrificing themselves gave them life instead of death.

Sir Yamada, "like a clear mirror, reflected a perfect image of their thoughts," and was wise in denying the identity of Takeakira. It is thus that Heaven rewards those who are dutiful to their parents.

If children who read this will practise filial piety, and endeavour to avoid grieving their father and mother, they will enjoy tranquil and long lives.

I sincerely recommend this.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER VII

PRIEST SAIKEI MEETS WITH AN ADVENTURE IN THE HAKONE MOUNTAINS

SAIKEI swung his staff, and took life easily on the Tokaido, which, even during the winter, affords pleasant resting-places for the pilgrim who has money in his pouch. Having

fallen into "the burning pit of the five sins," he did not hesitate to enjoy the luxuries of the celebrated places, or to linger at the most comfortable inns. It was therefore no

wonder that he failed to reach the Hakone range before midwinter.

One evening, as he was ascending the eastern base of the mountain, he met a woodcutter who was descending with a heavy load; noticing which, Saikei rang his bell, and said "*Namu*" for the benefit of the weary one.

"*Hai!*" said the fellow, halting, and resting his burden upon a jutting ledge of rock. "Holy priest, you are very kind. Unhappily, I have not a coin in my pouch."

After they had conversed for a while, Saikei said,—

"How far am I from an inn where I can spend the night?"

The woodcutter rubbed his right hand over his stubby beard, and, half closing his eyes, replied,—

"There is no inn nearer than Sokokura, but the Nameless Temple is not a bow-shot from here. I suppose a holy priest would prefer to rest there, though"—

Here he paused, and once more rubbed his rough chin.

Saikei, who had listened attentively, demanded,—

"Though what?"

The man glanced round with a scared air, then whispered,—

"Strange things! I am only an ignorant wood-cutter; therefore, even for a thousand bags of rice, I would not spend a night in that temple." Shuddering: "But you are a holy *bozu*; and by ringing your bell, and saying a prayer, can send demons howling as though they were scalded. *Hai!* I would like to have your power! I sometimes see horrible creatures up in these mountains, and 'my flesh becomes knotted.' If I were like you, I would fear neither darkness nor imps. Since the old Living Master up there died, they have heard mysterious sounds, and seen awful sights." Hoarsely: "His ghost has

returned to trouble his successor, and many persons have felt the cold hand. Holy priest, it will soon be stone dark, so please say a prayer to help me on my way. My liver is like a thread."

Saikei gravely repeated the formula, and rang his bell; which proceeding greatly comforted the man, who resumed his journey "at the quick pace of one whose feet are accustomed to the intricacies of the path."

"What a startling tale!" mused the priest. "I remember, this temple is one of the historical places of Hakone. It was founded by an old *bozu*, the son of Funata, a celebrated retainer of Nitta Yoshisada. A host of the latter's soldiers, who were killed in the battles of Izu and Sagami, were buried here; and the holy man settled in this spot, to bring their families and descendants into the way of salvation. It was a very pious act. I have heard that he erected tombstones over the heroes' graves; and, as the greater number of the bodies were never identified, he called the building 'The Nameless Temple.' He was a priest of the Jo-do sect, and believed in the ten invocations of Amida. Why should his spirit return to terrify people?"

By that time the moon, hereto obscured by clouds, shone brightly; noticing which, Saikei—who, without knowing it, was influenced by the wood-cutter's story—began to jingle his staff, and pray, as he ascended the mountain path leading to his destination.

Upon reaching the gates of the cemetery, he glanced up the long avenue of pitch-pine trees, whose overhanging branches stretched out menacingly, as though to guard the ranks of tombstones beneath and behind them; and, halting, thought,—

"What a lonely spot! I wish I could see a light."

At that instant a flame flashed up at the end of the vista, and burned just long enough to reveal the interior of the temple, in which two figures were seated; then it died down, and he could not even discern the outline of the building.

Saikei, trembling as though with ague, hunted in his knapsack, and brought forth a stone bottle, the orifice of which was plugged with wood.

"It is cold," he muttered. "I am not afraid, but do not desire to take a chill."

The *saké* soon warmed his torpid courage; and when some one in the temple lighted a lantern, he darted up the avenue "like a man pursued by unseen demons," in his anxiety entering the enclosure through a side gate.

Halting by a monument inscribed "*Namu Amida Butsu*," he glanced over a fence of woven bamboo, inside of which grew a pine-tree and some camellias; and beheld a strange sight, his position commanding a full view of the main hall of the building,

Two priests, one about thirty and the other a mere boy, were clinging to each other like crabs, and staring at the altar as though spell-bound by something they saw.

A flame flashed up on the outside of the veranda, and vanished; then a thin blue column of vapour issued from behind the idol, and the affrighted spectators heard a hollow voice saying,—

"Priest Emba, I hate you! Return my property!"

Saikei's knees knocked together, his teeth chattered, and he almost dropped his staff; while the *bozu* unclasped one another, and the elder, turning his pallid face toward the apparition, frantically ejaculated,—

"*Oya!* You are again here! I am sorry! Amida, save me!"

"*Koria!*" shouted the younger, covering his head with his sleeves. "Now I cannot remain in this temple."

Flash succeeded flash, by the light of which Saikei beheld the priests hastily gather their treasures together, and run like rats from a falling building; seeing which, he did not wait for the ghost to attack him, but, uttering a howl of terror, made the best use of his nimble legs.

He did not stop until he had descended the mountain, and reached the bank of a river, where, seating himself under a tree, and opening his knapsack, he once more moistened his dried-up courage.

By that time it was midnight: honest people were asleep; and the only sounds he heard were the piping of snipes hidden among the rushes, and the lapping of the water upon the piles of a neighbouring bridge. The cold wind searched his garments, and caused him to shiver; and the moon in her full glory lighted the scene like day.

As he returned the bottle to its hiding-place, his fingers touched the hand-mirror presented to him by Hachisuba; and he drew it out, saying,—

"Whenever I am melancholy, I look at this relic. I wonder whether I shall again meet the beautiful girl who gave it to me? *Hai!* the snow upon this scene resembles the despair upon my heart; and when I think of her, I feel equal to committing any crime. But spring will soon return; and all nature, bursting with life, will smile again. You precious gift, now reflect the cold landscape illuminated by the silver moon: in a few months your surface will glisten in the rays of the golden sun." Shuddering: "Thousand gods! what is this?"

His exclamation was caused by the reflection of a villainous countenance, with a head like a chestnut-burr, that suddenly appeared upon the polished surface of the mirror.

Upon springing to his feet, he was attacked by a gigantic brigand, armed with a sword, who, as he slashed at him, cried,—

“*Hai*, priest! I have been shivering in the wind, waiting for good luck, for a long time. I am not proud, and will soon turn your black robe into *saké*!”

Saikei, who remained very cool, and merely warded the giant's blows with his staff, suddenly roused himself, and, swinging his weapon like a sickle, swept the robber off his legs, and stretched him insensible upon the snow. Then, returning the mirror to his knapsack, he was about to resume his journey, when a fellow smaller but more villainous-looking than the first attacked him from behind, shouting,—

“You young *bozu*! You cannot escape from our clutches as easily as you imagine. I will make fishes' food of you!”

Saikei glanced at him, and defended himself ably; for, though he was in great dread of supernatural beings, he feared no man. However, he had travelled far that day, and was weak from hunger: so, finding his assailant was gaining ground, he recited a secret prayer, known only to priests; whereupon the robber's body shrank, and he stood with open mouth, as rigid as a stone idol.

The giant, who by that time had recovered sufficiently to sit up, regarded Saikei with amazement; then, bowing his head to the snow, nervously sucked in his breath, and said in a tremulous voice,—

“Holy priest, please forgive us! We will never again attack travellers in this place.”

Saikei made a grimace, and contemptuously replied,—

“You began like a typhoon; now your voice is as faint as a summer breeze. *Saa koi!* [Come on!] Rise and attack me. Even if you sell my skin for drum-heads, you will not grow fat on the proceeds!” adding, as though thinking aloud, “You both look worthy of better things than this ruffianism.” In a commanding voice: “Tell me your names.”

The giant, who still kept his head to the ground and trembled like a frightened dog, said in a pitiful tone,—

“I have surrendered, honourable holy priest, and will henceforth serve you truly; therefore please release my friend from the spell you have put upon him,—relax his sinews, and soften his bones. He is all broken up, like a crushed frog.”

“*Hai!* I had forgotten him,” carelessly replied the priest, touching the terror-stricken robber with his staff. “*Namu, namu, namu!*”

The fellow moved his limbs, as though to make certain they were no longer rigid, then sank upon the ground, and bowed his head in the same respectful manner as the giant; while the latter said,—

“Holy priest, we were both born on the base of Tate-yama, in the province of Etchū. When I was young, I was sent to school, but being lazy failed to learn any thing. My parents died; and after trying the patience of my relatives, I became a vagabond, wandering through all the provinces, and living like a fox by robbing high and low. My humble name is Kurobaye Kumosuke.”

“*Hai!*” ejaculated the smaller man. “That is so! My humble name is Shirobaye Untetsu.”

“Where do you sleep?” demanded Saikei, who was secretly delighted

to meet them. "Surely you cannot roost in the trees like birds."

"It is a very shameful thing to confess," muttered the giant. "Please, honourable holy priest, make us your servants, or let us go."

"Shall I treat you as I did your companion?" said Saikei, in a threatening tone.

"No, honourable holy priest! Ah, spare me!" bellowed Kurobaye. "Promise us pardon beforehand, and I will tell you every thing."

"Go on," said their conqueror. "Let every word be as white as snow."

The giant, who, notwithstanding the cold, perspired profusely, bowed, and said,—

"We have been very wicked. One night, a few months ago, when we were skulking about the Nameless Temple up in the mountain, we crept under the veranda outside the room in which the Living Master lay dying. He was old, and worn to a skeleton; but his voice was sound, and we heard him cry out, 'Return my property! Return my property!' This he did many times, even in his death-agony; while the *bozu*, who watched him closely, drowned his utterances with their prayers. When the body was temporarily left alone, we crept into the room, and hunted everywhere, but did not find even so much as a *rin*; and while the priests were absent at the funeral, we 'scraped the place,' fearing some rascality had been practised upon the late holy Living Master." Sadly: "We only had our labour, and a spurious *rio* we found in the treasure-box for our pains."

"Bad men," said Saikei, "you committed sacrilege!"

"We know it, holy priest,—we know it!" sadly answered the giant.

"We desire to be your servants, and thus atone for our sins."

"Go on with your disgraceful story," commanded their judge, suppressing his inclination to laugh. "I cannot promise any thing until I know all."

"My voice fails me," murmured the penitent.

Then Shirobaye took up the confession, and said, "Holy priest, when a kettle is foul it must be thoroughly scoured. It is useless for us to hide anything from you, who can turn us into rocks. After the death of the Living Master, we, feeling that he had been shamefully treated, planned to avenge his wrongs, and thus earn his gratitude in another world; besides, the nights were becoming too cold for us to lie under the trees."

He paused, scratched his burr-like head, and remained with his eyes downcast.

"I am waiting patiently," said Saikei in a menacing tone. "Would you like to feel my power again?"

"Ah, no, no!" quickly replied the little robber. "If you would only pardon us beforehand, my tongue would work like a bird-rattle." Sighing: "I will not be obstinate. Holy priest, I will show you the bottom of my heart. After the old Living Master died, the congregation of the temple offered his seat to one of his assistants, a mere boy,—a mere boy! We felt indignant at that, and at many other things they had done,—notably in stoutly repairing all the fences, so that we had difficulty in obtaining an entrance at night. These matters preyed upon our minds. Sleeping near a temple gives one an interest in the Living Master!"

"*Hai, hai!*" murmured Kurobaye, interrupting him. "We could not close our eyes, for thinking

of their baseness to the holy old man. One night, while we were resting in an out-building, Shirobaye snored like an ox, and I, becoming alarmed, rose, and crept outside the room of the young Living Master. To my amazement, he, who had the power to stiffen men and expel demons, was trembling with fear; and all the other priests were clustered together, murmuring '*Namu*!' "

"*Namu Amida Butsu*!" solemnly ejaculated Saikei, ringing his bell mechanically.

"That was the beginning of it," continued the giant. "Finding them as timid as hares, we grew bold, and visited them every night,—sometimes frightening them just as they were eating their evening meal, and, when they took refuge in the cemetery, rushing into the temple, and securing the food. Ah! their livers became as small as grains of sand! They told people that the wandering spirit of the holy old Living Master had returned to haunt the place; so we acted upon their hint, and"—

"Last night we burned paper, groaned, pretended to be the ghost, and drove them out of the temple," added his confederate. "*Hai*! we have sinned, we have sinned!" Sadly: "And received very little for it! Indeed, we were never extravagant in our ideas."

"Holy master priest, we humbly beg you will decide our fate," pleaded Kurobaye. "We are as clay in your powerful hands. We solemnly pledge ourselves never again to trouble the holy *bozu* of the Nameless Temple. We regret what we have done; but our bodies had to be nourished, and we could not sleep like foxes. Are our sins too great for the compassion of Buddha?"

Then they bowed, and sucked in

their breath repeatedly, and remained with their foreheads close to the snow.

Saikei permitted them to expend their humility; then, covering his face with his sleeves, laughed secretly until his emotion became uncontrollable, and he uttered a roar that brought the robbers to their feet "as though they had been struck into the air by demons."

"What does this mean?" inquired Kurobaye of Shirobaye, glancing at him in amazement.

"*Hai, hai, hai*!" screamed Saikei. "You are like tender rice, that needs transplanting and careful cultivation. Sit near me, and listen to words of wisdom."

The robbers obeyed, and their conqueror continued,—

"I was once a priest who desired to touch the sky upon the sacred mountain [attain high rank]. Now, like yourselves, I am as a stream flowing among the rocks: sometimes my life runs swiftly, at others creeps like a tortoise. Last night I met a woodcutter, who told me of the ghost in the Nameless Temple. I guessed that it was caused by some clumsy fellows like yourselves, so set my trap and caught you."

He did not tell them how they had quickened the beating of his heart, and caused his eyes to protrude like those of a lobster; but, producing his bottle, gave each a liberal allowance. He related part of his own history; speaking boastfully of his adventures with Hachisuba and Tomosada, and giving the robbers plainly to understand that he was a master rogue, and they mere apprentices.

"You have built a good foundation for me," he patronizingly remarked. "Now do as I command. Go to Sokokura, sell your swords, buy robes such as are worn by travelling priests, shave your heads,

and practise humility of deportment for forty days; at the end of which time, return here, and inquire for your teacher. I shall be at the Nameless Temple."

"Master, we obey, but—we cannot live for such a long time on air," murmured Kurobaye.

"Nor buy priests' garments with promises to pay the dealers in Paradise," added Shirobaye. "We know we resemble wolves, and that we will have to live like hermits before our faces are as saintly as yours. Where shall we pick up the funds?"

"Listen," said Saikei, taking out his pouch, and handing Kurobaye two *riō*. "You will pay for your companion. Do as I have instructed you, and return as directed, with pallid faces and gentle manners. I warn you not to touch *saké*; and you must break yourselves of your swaggering walk, cast down your eyes when you address any one, and pretend to be timid—especially before women. Speak in this voice" (imitating that of a very holy *bōzu* whom he knew), "and I will reply in this manner" (mimicking the Living Master of Cho-ko). "If you obey me, all will be well, as I shall profess to be a priest of the Shin sect, and you will neither have to fast, nor perform penance. You know the old saying: 'As long as a priest has the face of a saint, his body may be as bloated as a toad's.' It will be an easier and more pleasant existence than watching for travellers on the river-bank upon a cold night."

The robbers saluted him profoundly, and Kurobaye said,—

"Henceforth we will be like your children. You may, in all things, trust us to the death."

After listening to some other instructions, they rose, and started for Sokokura, feeling like men taken

under the protection of some powerful lord.

When they were out of sight, Saikei proceeded to a little place called Oiso, where, pretending to be lame, he remained in a small apartment of the miserable inn, studying the religious books of the Shin sect, and listening to the gossip of the guests. He soon learned that the young Living Master of the Nameless Temple had vanished like water in sand; and that, though the congregation had offered the position to many old begging priests, not one of the latter would accept "the bait-covered hook."

Upon the thirtieth day of his seclusion, he sent for a barber; and, having had his head and face shaved, paid his bill, said a prayer for the benefit of the household, and started towards the Nameless Temple, arriving at the house of the chief elder about sunset.

The man received him respectfully, and after inviting him to enter his dwelling, and entertaining him, bowed, and said,—

"Honourable priest, you are accumulating years; why are you wandering as a pilgrim? Surely you are injuring your prospects of being Living Master of your temple, which is in"—

"A distant province," calmly answered Saikei. "Hearing of the hundred thousand unhappy beings withering for lack of the dew of salvation, I have become a travelling priest, in order to teach people the true doctrine."

"Holy priest, you are indeed benevolent," said the elder. "Your honourable name is"—

"Of no more importance than a drop of dew," quietly replied the visitor. "I am not seeking a reputation in this world."

The elder and his wife greatly admired this speech, and the man said,—

"You, who thus earnestly desire to save sinners from destruction, can surely calm a malicious spirit, and fill an empty temple?"

"Every thing is possible through the saving power of Amida Buddha," murmured Saikei. "I, like our great teacher Shin-ran Sho-nin, wander from province to province, teaching those who are in darkness that the true doctrine is the Shin."

"We have many unbelievers hereabouts," said the elder. "Honourable holy priest, I beg you will weigh my words. As you came up the mountain, to my poor habitation, you must have seen a large gate guarding the entrance to a cemetery; in the centre of which, embowered in trees, is a famous temple. The avenue of pitch-pines, through which it is approached, is very beautiful; and the temple itself is in excellent repair. I keep it so."

"*Amida!*" said Saikei in an absent manner.

The elder and his wife repeated the invocation in a lower tone, and bowed; then Saikei said,—

"I must resume my journey."

"No, honourable holy priest," urged the man. "You have not heard all I have to say. Buddha has sent you hither. I beg you will listen."

He related the events known to the reader, ending his speech as follows:—

"The elders have consulted together many times, and invoked the powerful aid of Kwannon and Seishi; but have failed to elect another Living Master, as all who are worthy of the position are afraid of the ghost. You will confer great benefit upon us if you will pray for the salvation of the wandering spirit. Please grant my request."

Saikei pretended to think for a long time, as though disliking to

accede to the elder's petition; then said,—

"There is no person but who, at some time in his life, has to cross the free ferry [accept a kindness]. There is no nation outside the shadow of the compassionate cloud [beyond the aid of the merciful Buddha]. Nothing is easier to me than obtaining the salvation of a ghost; besides, as it is the spirit of a former Living Master, I am obliged to comfort it. Even though I suffer the torments of unseen demons, I will stay in the temple all night, and learn the cause of the visitation. Please show me the way."

"Honourable holy priest, will you not take pity upon us, and accept the position of Living Master?" eagerly inquired the elder. "Our people are falling into sin as the frost-rent rocks fall into the valley. I humbly beg you will agree to do this. The hunter who shoots at a flock of geese seldom brings down a single bird, while he who only aims at one generally secures it."

Saikei, who secretly felt annoyed at this chance allusion to his father's business, coldly inclined his head, and answered,—

"I know nothing of hunting. Please show me the way to the Nameless Temple."

The elder retired, and, lighting a pine-knot torch, presently appeared in front of the house, and, bowing, said,—

"Honourable holy priest, I await your pleasure."

While Saikei was repeating a prayer, and ringing his bell, for the benefit of the house, the elder's wife crept to the entrance, and, motioning her husband to approach, whispered,—

"Honourable husband, I am very anxious for your safety. If you

must visit that dreadful place, please return soon. My skin 'is like contracted threads' through fear. Ah! if you should feel the cold hand of the ghost, as the young Living Master did!"

As she ceased speaking, they heard the wind moaning and sighing in the mountain ranges; and presently the bell of a distant temple rang out the hour of the Rat [midnight].

"I am ready," said Saikei, emerging from the house. "Lead the way. This is a good time to meet wandering spirits."

The night was "dark as the lower pit," and the air piercingly cold; notwithstanding which, the priest followed joyfully, repeating his prayers and ringing his bell. Now that he had captured the ghost, he was as brave as a tiger; and, when his guide hesitated and trembled, he said,—

"Jo-do teaching does not give you the comfort of true religion. Why do you not repeat the ten invocations of Amida?"

The elder's teeth chattered, as, raising the torch aloft, he pointed to the temple, and said,—

"Here is the place. Come into the main hall, and let me find you something to kneel upon. The *bozu* and the thieves have carried off every thing but the sacred image of Buddha."

"I suppose that was too heavy a load for Kurobaye and Shirobaye," thought Saikei; adding aloud, "I cannot understand a priest abandoning the sacred image of Amida. Go home to your wife. I will kneel here before the altar, and pray for the unhappy spirit of the old Living Master."

"There is oil in the lamp before the Buddha," said the trembling elder. "Shall I light the wick?"

"No. My strange face might

alarm the spirit," calmly answered Saikei, taking his place upon the mats spread for him. "*Namu Amida Butsu! Amida! Amida! Amida!*"

In another instant he was alone, and the elder was rushing like a spring torrent down the pathway, thinking,—

"He will be scared presently. Wait until he feels the cold hand! *Oya!*"

The watcher prayed, and tinkled his bell, until he felt sure the elder was safely hidden under the bed-clothes; when he wrapped his robes tightly about him, stretched himself at full length upon the ragged mats, and was soon dreaming of Hachisuba.

He was awakened by the sharp morning air; and as he sat up, and beat his body, thought,—

"It is strange how the memory of that deer-eyed *koto*-player haunts me! If I could induce the people here to embrace the Shin doctrine, I would accept the position of Living Master, and send big Kurobaye to Kanzaki to kidnap her. I have long been convinced that the Shin is the only reasonable teaching. Away up here, one would be almost out of the reach of the high authorities; besides, if I succeeded in changing the form of worship from Jo-do to Shin, they would not make too strict inquiry as to my method, but would take my offerings, and confirm the election of the congregation. I must proceed cautiously, by first accepting the offer made me, then gradually bringing the people round to regard the Shindoctrine. These Jo-do fanatics are very obstinate. What can it matter to them which path they take to salvation. It is ridiculous!"

At that moment he heard the sound of approaching voices; whereupon he assumed a saintly pose,

and began to murmur his prayers, and ring his bell.

The noise grew more distinct; and presently the chief elder and a number of the congregation entered the enclosure, expecting to find the priest "scared out of his seven senses."

"Look!" gasped their leader. "He is just where I left him last! *Hai, hai!*"

He advanced to the entrance, and, crouching low, respectfully sucked in his breath, and said,—

"Honourable holy priest, we have spent an uneasy night thinking of you, and have risen early to come hither. Have you seen any thing during the evil hours?"

Saikei waited until he had repeated the formula a hundred times, then rang his bell vigorously to show that his prayers were ended, and, slowly turning his face toward the chief elder, appeared surprised at beholding him; whereupon the man humbly repeated his speech, and the people knelt, and bowed their foreheads to the ground.

The priest waited until no sound could be heard but the falling of the snow from the trees, when he calmly answered,—

"You were not misinformed. About the hour of the Ox, the spirit of the late Living Master appeared to me, in great distress, begging to be relieved from undeserved punishment, and praying that I would aid him. I, pitying him greatly, read one volume of *Murioju Kio* [great sacred book of constant life]; when he communicated the cause of his unhappiness to me, and passed away like a morning mist. I am certain he has now obtained rest."

"Honourable holy priest, what troubled him?" respectfully inquired the chief elder.

"That I can only reveal to the

members of this temple," quietly answered Saikei. "Please summon them, and all the neighbours. I have a very unpleasant duty to perform."

"You are indeed a Living Buddha!" cried the chief elder. "I worship you,—I worship you!"

All the others did the same, then ran about like ants preparing food for the priest, and summoning every one for miles around to hear his wonderful revelation.

Upon the seventh day, a large assembly met in the temple; and Saikei, after repeating his prayers, glanced at them compassionately, and said in a slow, measured tone,—

"There is one among you, who, when the late Living Master changed his world, kept the money he entrusted to him. This man must confess before you, and make immediate restitution."

As nobody answered, and Saikei could not detect the thief by watching their faces, he continued,—

"The ghost of the late Living Master appeared to me, and revealed the cause of his misery." Slyly watching his audience through his half-closed eyes: "He told me the name of the thief, who had better confess his crime before I denounce him. If he does not, an awful punishment awaits him and his entire family. Confess, confess; or you and yours will suffer innumerable torments in your future states."

This denunciation so affected a hard-featured man who was kneeling near the door, and fervently counting his beads, that his hands trembled, and he bowed his head to hide his agitation.

Saikei noticed this; but did not denounce him, as he desired to raise himself even higher in the estimation of the worshippers.

"Ah! you are a very stubborn man!" he continued, glancing over

their heads, as though at the distant landscape. "You imagine that I do not know your face. I desire to save you and your family from the pit of sin, so will delay giving your name for a moment, and afford you an opportunity to confess."

The congregation looked askance at one another, and repeated the ten invocations of Amida; all but the thief thinking,—

"It must be my neighbour."

Saikei, rising, sternly regarded the culprit; who, afraid of the priest's glittering eyes, was "struggling between a demon and a good spirit;" but when Saikei extended his left hand, and pointed with his forefinger at him, he shrieked with remorse, and ejaculated,—

"I—I—I am the thief! Mercy, mercy!"

"You have saved yourself a cycle of misery," calmly observed Saikei. "Come forward, and clear your bosom of its load."

The man crawled along the mats, and upon reaching the altar prostrated himself, and said in a voice interrupted by sobs,—

"I will strip myself, and conceal nothing [tell the truth]. The late Living Master had a fortune left him by his honourable father, Funata; part of which he expended in erecting tombstones for the soldiers of Nitta, and in building this temple. The Living Master, disliking to 'bury the gold where it would not grow,' intrusted it to me; and I loaned it in small sums, receiving thank-money from the borrowers and a commission from the Living Master, who, when he was dying, privately sent for me. But I, conspiring with one of his assistants, stayed away, and have heard that he expired crying, 'Return my property!' After his death, the priest and myself destroyed the receipts; and, before I could

collect the loans, my partner decamped: so I kept all the money. Until I heard what the ghost told you, I never felt sorry for my crime. I know I have committed a great sin. I will restore every coin. Please remove future affliction from my family."

"*Namu, namu!*" ejaculated the congregation. "Honourable holy priest, we pray you to become the Living Master of this temple!"

Saikei calmly waited until they ceased to utter even a murmur; then, addressing the penitent, said in a measured tone,—

"A perfect confession will destroy five contrary motives and ten serious sins. Bring the money here immediately, and I will perform the religious rites necessary to expel the demons from your body; but if you are still partly bewitched, and keep back even one *rin*, all my power cannot save you or your family from countless ages of torture. You must beware!"

The man's face grew as pale as boiled rice. Then he hastened home, running like a deer, presently returning with a package containing two hundred *rio*, which he humbly handed to Saikei; who, after counting the coins, restored them to the bag, and solemnly handed it to the chief elder, saying,—

"Expend that for prayers and an annual religious ceremony in memory of the late Living Master. You can use any surplus in re-building ruined bridges, and repairing the roads. This will comfort his spirit, and cause him to be respected in the unknown world. It will also bring happiness to this congregation. Appoint some one to keep the money in trust for the purposes I have named."

Upon hearing this, the people bowed respectfully, and cried together,—

"No, no! No one would like to take charge of that bag. Honourable holy priest, keep it, and use it as you please."

They deputed the chief elder to wait upon Saikei, and to again urge him to accept the position of Living Master of the temple. At first, he positively refused; when the chief elder said,—

"Although this is a miserably poor place for such a holy priest, we humbly pray you will not turn a deaf ear to us, but will increase the light of this temple. We will attend upon you, and spend all our savings in alms."

Saikei, still pretending to be averse to their offer, answered sadly,—

"You know I have vowed to convert all Nippon to the true way; and that, as yet, I have visited only a few provinces. It is not my desire to be induced by you to remain here, and become like a tree upon these mountains. Think of the millions who are thirsting for the dew of true knowledge! How can I abandon them for the sake of a few enlightened people like yourselves? It would be a crime on my part."

"Living Buddha, remain and save us!" cried the congregation as with one voice.

The priest prayed fervently for nearly an hour; during which the people repeated their request until they became as hoarse as crows; when he bowed slightly, and said,—

"It is impossible! You are all devout members of the Jo-do sect, and I am a believer in the teachings of Shin-ran Sho-nin. Although there is very little difference in the doctrine,—the Shin is the true one,—you would not like me as Living Master, so I must respectfully decline."

The congregation listened with

bated breath; then one old woman, famous for her piety, said in a quavering voice,—

"I was always told by my honourable parents that the Shin was the most pure doctrine. The only difference between it and ours is that the *bozu* are permitted to marry. This has ever appeared very sensible to me."

"*Hai, hai!*" shouted the congregation. "Living Buddha, remain and enlighten us!"

Saikei, who sat as though absorbed in thought, bowed slightly, and said,—

"It is difficult to abandon the salvation of the many, and to save only a few. I desire to teach the true doctrine in every province of great Japan."

"Living Buddha, remain and save us from sin!" murmured the women. "*Namu, namu, namu!*"

While Saikei prayed, the elders consulted; and, when the priest once more acknowledged their presence, the chief elder bowed, sucked in his breath, and said,—

"Living Buddha! Although we have always practised the doctrine of Ho-nen Sho-nin, we understand very little about the differences between his teaching and that of Shin-ran Sho-nin; therefore, accepting your high wisdom, beg you will teach us what you consider best. No one will ever dispute your authority. If you desire to marry, there will be no opposition to your wish,—indeed, you will not have to go a long journey to find a suitable wife. Please become our Living Master!"

The priest, who had closed his eyes while the elder spoke, solemnly replied,—

"The spirit of the late Living Master urged me to do as you ask; both the living and the dead unite their prayers. *Namu Amida Butsu!*

When the holy Shin-ran bade farewell to Rio-kai, on returning to Kioto, he inverted his staff, and thrust it into the ground, saying, 'The strength of my faith, and the salvation of the people, shall endure like this staff.' You have all heard how that staff took root, and became a grand *Icho*-tree, which can be seen any day in the courtyard of the temple of Zempuku, and is known all over the world [Japan] as the Staff *Icho*. If I, imitating the saint, plant my staff here, I hope my reward may be like his. One thing I will promise: while teaching the Shin doctrines, I will not at first remove the emblems of the Jo-do sect, whose priests have so long uttered their prayers at this altar; but in all other matters, and in my teaching, I shall follow the Shin methods. There are two of my assistants on their road hither, who may arrive at any moment. If they betray surprise at my acceptance of the Living Mastership of this temple, you will explain that I only yielded to your earnest prayers. *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

"Living Buddha! Living Buddha! *Namu, namu!*" shouted the congregation, overjoyed at his decision. "We will look out for your disciples."

They cleared up the rooms, furnished new vessels and vestments, and made the altar beautiful; some expending their last *rin* in contributing. No one cared for the cost, knowing what a treasure they had secured; and, strangely enough, not even the women inquired his religious name.

Upon the morning of the seventh day of his installation, two *bozu* ascended the mountain, and, halting at the chief elder's house, inquired whether he had seen a holy priest pass that way. One of them was tall as a bamboo, and the other short and stout; but both had thin

faces, sleepy eyes, and down-drawn mouths.

The elder saluted the pilgrims reverently, and conducted them to the Nameless Temple; on the way relating the story of the ghost, and the difficulty he had experienced in persuading their teacher to become the Living Master.

Saikei received them with great dignity; but, when their escort had departed, led the way into a private room, and, after treating them to several cups, described the trick he had played upon the pious folks of the congregation; then gave each of the rascals ten *ri*, remarking,—

"You both look like genuine priests. Be as happy as you like in this retreat, but pull solemn faces before the faithful. You know the old saying: 'When you come across a good tub of *saké*, do not drink it like water.'"

"*Hai, hai, hai!*" chorused his assistants. "We have been studying priestly tricks for forty days, and feel like old *bozu*. Of what sect are we? We quite forgot which you decided upon."

"Shin!" replied Saikei, twisting his mouth comically. "Keep your lips as tight as clams just out of the water, and you shall enjoy all the good things of this life. You, of course, know that priests of our sect are allowed to marry, and to live like reasonable beings?"

"I know that you are as wise as Buddha and Daruma put together," said his disciples. "Honourable Living Master, rest assured that we will obey all your instructions."

The next day there was a grand festival at the temple; during which Saikei announced that his name was Uden Hoshi [Buddha's Priest], and introduced Kurobaye as Priest Koku-un [Black Cloud], and Shirobaye as Priest Haku-un [White Cloud].

It did not take long for his fame to spread all over the Hakone range; and so great was the belief in the Living Buddha of the Nameless Temple, that sick persons came from great distances to receive the faith-cure. The ignorant rustics really worshipped him; and his touch became like rain to rice-plants withering from drought, while his name "rolled like thunder from mountain to mountain:" so they divided the characters Uden into *U* and *den* (Thunder Priest), and addressed their Living Master by that name.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE
AUTHOR.

Truth and flattery sometimes resemble each other, when in reality they are as different as heaven and earth.

The dog of the robber Toseki barked at the sage Shin, because it could not discriminate between the true and the false.

One dog will bark at a strange form, and another at a strange voice; but neither knows what impels it to utter the sound.

A blind man will lead a thousand persons who are similarly afflicted, and none of them will know whither they are going.

The ignorant congregation of the Nameless Temple could not discern the difference between a true and false priest, or give a good reason why they believed in Saikei; while he, like a blind man leading the blind, was conducting them toward the edge of a precipice over which all must tumble.

Neither believe in a *bozu*, nor his doctrine, until you are thoroughly acquainted with both.

This is the respectful advice of

BAKIN.

CHAPTER VIII

THUNDER PRIEST EMBRACES THE DOCTRINE OF SHIN-RAN SHO-NIN

SOON after Takeakira departed from his brother's house, Takeyasu was seized with a disease that confined him to his room; which misfortune greatly irritated him, Lord Kiga having temporarily appointed another falconer in his place.

Hachisuba, who was kept continually by his side, secretly mourned over her fate, and impatiently waited for the termination of his sickness; thinking,—

"I hope I shall be a man in my next state. It is most trying to be a woman! I have no rest day or night, fetching this and preparing that; and have not seen the outside of the house, or been decently dressed, for weeks. I feel as though I had a wen on my eyes. Ah! before I was tied like a tortoise to a stick, I often visited the temple,

and received the consolation of religion. Now I might as well be an *Aino* [savage]. Ah, how sad! If I were to die, what would become of my spirit? I try to preserve a respectful mien and smiling face, and cheerfully respond to the hundred thousand wants of this peevish dotard; while in my heart I long for the day when the black robe [priest] will perform the ceremony of *goma* [service for the very sick] for my honourable husband's benefit." Smiling sadly: "*Goma!* Ah! how beautiful the handsome priest looked when he burned the thin sticks of wood! I remember he was engaged in celebrating that rite, the first time I saw him. As the splints crackled and flashed, he glanced out of the corners of his eyes; and, noticing that I was

watching him, his face flushed as though he were burning an offering for me. People say it is a sin to admire a priest; so I, being the wife of an honourable *samurai*, must eat my heart. Still I can not, will not deny myself the happiness of thinking of him. Some plants only bear one blossom, and millions of leaves: they are like my life. My spirit expanded when he shared the cup with me, and told me with his eyes what his lips hesitated to utter. That was the blossoming of my life! He comes to me in my dreams, but shall I ever again meet him in this state? If the gods were all of my sex, our happiness would be more evenly divided!"

One evening, during the second month of the year, she received a visit from an old woman belonging to the congregation of the Nameless Temple; who, after sucking in her breath, bowing many times, making the usual polite inquiries concerning the health of the household, and commonplace remarks, sat up on her heels, and said,—

"There are various paths leading to the attainment of complete happiness. When we find ourselves upon the wrong one, it is our duty to quit."

"*Hai!*" sadly assented Hachisuba. "But there are some paths one must follow to the end."

The visitor bowed with the polite accompaniment, and replied,—

"Not religious paths. You are aware that I, being a believer in the Jo-do doctrine, have never neglected to repeat the ten invocations of Amida, and have looked forward to the time when he would come to meet my spirit, and conduct it to a seat on the Great Western Lotus Terrace."

"*Hai!*" very politely from Hachisuba.

"That is all a delusion," eagerly

continued her visitor. "I have renounced the Jo-do doctrine, like one who casts aside a pair of worn-out straw shoes. I am illuminated with a new light; my feet are on the true path; and"—enthusiastically clasping her withered hands—"ah! he is truly a Living Buddha!"

"*Oya, oya!* ejaculated Hachisuba, regarding her with amazement. "What is his honourable name?"

Just then a maid entered with some tea; and when the old lady was served, and had nervously drained a cup, she continued,—

"He is about twenty-seven years old; has the face of a saint and a voice and manner that would convert demons."

She rambled on, describing the miracles wrought by the Living Master of the Nameless Temple, and how he had converted all the congregation to the Shin faith. But though her hostess many times politely inquired the name of the famous priest, she was too much interested in his acts to reply, until, having "emptied her bucket," she paused for breath; whereupon Hachisuba repeated her question.

"Ah! His honourable name!" said the venerable woman, as her entertainer again assisted her to tea. "He is called Thunder Priest, but his religious title is Uden Hoshi."

"It is a very appropriate name for a holy *bozu*," carelessly observed Hachisuba. "Has he a tiny wart upon his forehead?"

"*Hai!* he bears that supernatural mark," replied the dame. "I came to advise your honourable husband to visit the Nameless Temple. I am sure the touch of Thunder Priest would cure him."

"Is the holy *bozu* liberal in his ideas?" demanded Hachisuba.

"*Hai!*" quickly answered the visitor. "Ah! he has made the

altar beautiful, and has such glorious robes! He has travelled in many provinces, and is so free from bigotry that he has not removed the Jo-do notice-boards, and has placed on a side altar a metal hand-mirror once belonging to a noble Shinto whom he converted. I am sure he could cure your honourable husband like a flash."

Hachisuba returned to Takeyasu's room, and reported part of what the old lady had said; when her husband, who was not inclined to piety, replied,—

"If a woman imagines she has a disease, she is readily relieved by the faith-cure. For myself, I prefer the doctor's medicine to the touch of the *bozu*. I am recovering slowly, but surely, and do not need the aid of Thunder Priest. Please thank the honourable guest for her neighbourly concern, and offer her a cup of *saké*."

"But she is a very religious person," said Hachisuba.

Takeyasu laughed in spite of his pain, and answered,—

"I understood you to say that the new Living Master is of the Shin sect. If the venerable dame has embraced his doctrine, she will not simper when you offer her the benevolent moisture. Do as I bid you. I know the way to please old women."

"*Hai!*" thought Hachisuba. "It is a great pity your first wife died!"

Upon returning to her visitor, she soon discovered that her husband was right; the *saké* lubricating the tongue of the enthusiast, and making her even more communicative than before. Out of the torrent of her eloquence, her hostess "landed certain fish;" *i.e.*, discovered that Thunder Priest in many ways closely resembled Saiké, and that the handle of the metal mirror was bound with silk of five colours.

"I will see him, even if I am killed for so doing," she thought, as she listened mechanically to her voluble visitor. "Will the plant of my existence bear another blossom?" To the old lady: "*Hai, hai!*"

"I must quit your delightful presence," remarked her guest, who was beginning to feel the effect of the *saké*. "Honourable holy Thunder Priest will no doubt marry one of our village girls. It is good for a *bozu* to know the relation of parent and child."

She bowed, and sucked in her breath repeatedly, and uttered the proper expressions used when leaving an intimate friend; to all of which Hachisuba responded in an absent manner, her thoughts being far away.

From that time she became a changed woman, and attended upon her husband with such tact and apparent pleasure that one day he sent for her, and said,—

"My sickness has continued later into the spring than the doctor expected; and I have been unable to visit the graves of my old chief's followers, many of whom were my comrades in arms. I would also like to offer alms for their benefit." Giving her some money: "Take this for me, and, if there is no service being performed, return quickly."

"Honourable husband, if there is, may I remain and worship?" she demurely inquired. "I have not heard any holy reading since I became your wife. Attending to her religious duties always strengthens a woman's good resolves, and makes her life cheerful."

"*Hai!*" slowly replied Takeyasu. "I suppose it does. Take Cho-suke with you. A little religion will not harm the old man."

She bowed respectfully, and thanked her husband for his kind

consideration ; then, retiring to her room, dressed herself in the garments she had worn at Kanzaki.

As she knelt, and regarded herself in her metal mirror, she touched her lips with *beni* [rouge], and thought,—

“I feel as though my feet were winged ! I must put more powder upon my face, or the glow of my soul will shine through my skin. If it be only he, I will wait patiently for my widowhood, and continue to be a tender wife to my honourable husband. Human life seldom extends over fifty years, and my honourable husband is as shaky as an old bamboo fence. My heart beats like a drum ! Let me say a prayer : *Namu, namu, namu !* How my hand trembles ! I will be very circumspect, and will not even glance at him. Perhaps he has repented. Ah ! I never thought of that ! He must have done penance under the torrent, and fasted for several months, for he is now a Living Master. No, priests of the Shin sect never perform penance. I think I had better not go,” pausing as she powdered her arms anew. “He will not know me, now my eyebrows are shaven and my teeth blackened” (done at marriage). “I will put him out of my thoughts, and attend to my religious duties.” Calling to the servant : “Cho-suke, I am ready to go to the Nameless Temple.”

She set out, followed by the faithful old man ; who, as he walked, made a grimace, and thought,—

“This new Living Master draws converts as syrup does flies. The steps of the temple suit me just as well as the foremost mat, as I can retire when the elder comes round with the dipper. A poor fellow like myself cannot afford to pay for religion. My honourable mistress in her brocade robes looks as beautiful as Benten Sama ; still I wish

she were older, and not so attractive. An aged man who weds a young woman marries trouble. *Hai !* here we are at the temple ! How spruce every thing is ! They have put up a new awning to keep the sun from injuring the worshippers’ complexions.”

The main apartment was full of people, and the scene one to make the hearts of believers swell with joy.

Hachisuba waited until the elders had enclosed a special place with a screen, in which she could kneel apart from the villagers, and paid her many other little attentions due her rank ; after receiving which, she reverently bowed her head, and repeated her prayers, then sat up on her heels, and, glancing about the place, presently spied the mirror upon a side altar.

“Surely I shall not be disappointed,” she thought, and clasping her hands, murmured, “*Namu, namu, namu !*”

The main altar was draped in the Shin manner, and was a glory of colour and fabrics ; but upon the pillars on its right and left were long black lacquered boards, inscribed in golden characters,—

JO-DO SHO-SHU DSU-SUTE.

[“Although the Jo-do [priests] freely accept alms, they do not squander them.”]

A number of people were kneeling upon the mats, and three elders dressed in *kami-shimo* [ceremonial over-garments] were preparing for an important service ; the chief, who knelt at a low desk near the entrance, being busily engaged in writing upon miniature *sotoba* [wooden tablets inscribed with the names of deceased persons, or sentences from sacred books], while one of his aids dusted the bamboo basket in which the alms were to be emptied, and the other collected

the "first offering" from new arrivals, and vended blank *sotoba*,—bargaining with the worshippers about the inscriptions they required, like a pedlar at a fair.

The congregation chatted sociably until the black-robed Koku-un and Haku-un entered, followed by Thunder Priest, who was robed in pure white. Upon seeing him, all the voices were hushed; everybody bowed to the mats, and nothing was heard but the chirping of the birds, the gentle rustling of the leaves, and the hum of insects in the trees surrounding the temple.

Hachisuba glanced fixedly at the Living Master, and recognized in him her former admirer Saikei, then prostrated herself like the rest of the congregation; but instead of repeating *Namu*, she rapturously murmured,—

"It is he!"

Thunder Priest, with a rosary over his clasped hands, and a face as calm as the Eternal Buddha, solemnly performed a memorial service for the benefit of the late Living Master; during which, Hachisuba sat with joined palms, and, while uttering pious ejaculations, never once removed her eyes from his face.

Koku-un sounded the altar-bell; and, as its musical throbs reverberated through the temple, the elder with the dipper moved hither and thither, shouting,—

"Give freely! Give freely! *Amida! Amida!*"

Thunder Priest intoned the invocation, in which the congregation joined; Koku-un rang the bell, and Haku-un lighted the candles and burned fragrant incense,—until the worshippers, exalted by the sight, sounds, and perfume, began to clasp their hands and sway their bodies like maniacs, and to empty their pouches as though desirous of

ridding themselves of some hateful thing, ejaculating,—

"*Namu! Thankful! Thankful!*"

"*Namu! Amida! Butsu!*"

"All of us pray for holy priest!"

"*Amida! Amida! Amida!*"

"Living Buddha! Living Buddha! Pray for us!"

They wrapped their offerings in paper which they took from their sleeves, and kept the elders busy receiving the alms.

While the din was in progress, Koku-un, who watched the tray, and roared "*Amida*" in a voice that could be heard at the other end of the avenue, glanced at Hachisuba; then, averting his face toward the altar, said in an undertone, to his superior,—

"Honourable master, look at that blossom on the right."

Thunder Priest kept his eyes closed, and continued his musical invocation.

"*Moshi!*" breathed Haku-un, throwing a big pinch of incense into the *koro*, and pretending to cough as though the smoke affected his lungs. "Honourable master, a ripe persimmon has dropped inside our fence."

"*Namu! namu! namu!*" shouted the men.

"Living Buddha, save us!" said Hachisuba in a clear, musical voice: "*Amida! Amida! Amida!*"

"Thankful! Thankful!" mumbled the old women.

"*Amida! Amida!*" chanted the elder with the dipper, as he dexterously caught the offerings.

"*Amida!*" hurriedly ejaculated the other, while he busily opened the papers, and emptied the coins into the basket.

"*Amida! Amida!*" gravely murmured the chief elder, quickly running his brush down the *sotoba*, and placing them aside to dry for their owners.

Then the bell was rung three times in three turns; and, when its cadence had died away, Thunder Priest, advancing a pace before his assistants, knelt, bowed, and prayed silently, after which he sat up on his heels, and opening his eyes beheld Hachisuba, who, fascinated by his gaze, regarded him with the deepest admiration.

Fortunately for her, all the congregation were similarly engaged.

Thunder Priest, instantly mastering his surprise, raised his clasped hands, and intoned the usual invocation before preaching; to which all the people but Cho-suke murmured a response, while the latter, awakened by the sudden silence, shouted,—

"*Hai!* I forgot! *Naa-mu! Naa-mu! Naa-mu!*"

The Living Master glanced sternly at him, and everybody turned in his direction; whereupon the abashed old man gradually shrank down until his head was below the level of the veranda, after which he crawled to the rear of the building, and making a detour among the graves, rapidly descended the avenue until he reached the gate, where he awaited the dismissal of the congregation.

When quiet was restored,—the episode of Cho-suke's disappearance causing some merriment among the worshippers,—Thunder Priest said in a low, musical voice,—

"I desire to draw your attention to the teachings of Shin-ran Sho-nin. Our sect, which is called Shin,—literally meaning the Truth,—teaches the doctrine of help from another."

"*Namu, namu, namu!*" fervently ejaculated the audience.

"Our present existence," solemnly continued the preacher, "is influenced by our conduct in past lives, and our past and present actions

will affect our future states. No one can truly deny this."

"*Amida!*" from the chief elder; who, however, did not cease his occupation of inscribing the *sotoba*.

"Your late Living Master was, no doubt, a wise and pious priest; and his spirit is now at rest," said the preacher. "You were taught to avoid sin, and that you might ultimately attain *Nirvana* by self-effort depending on other effort. Up to the time I came here, you believed in that doctrine as the cause of salvation, and that your salvation would be effected by that doctrine;" appealingly, "was it not so?"

"*Hai, hai, hai!*" from everybody, mingled with cries of "*Amida!*" the elder, who was counting the coins in the basket, and Koku-un and Haku-un, who were attentively watching him, continuing their utterances long after the others.

Thunder Priest waited a moment, then said impressively,—

"It is difficult to overcome an inclination to do wrong; and, while Buddhism teaches many ways of accomplishing this, ours is the only true doctrine. No one can depend upon his own efforts, but must rely upon help through another."

"*Amida! Amida!*" sweetly murmured Hachisuba.

"Who is another?" demanded the priest. "It is the mighty Amida! Amida means Boundless, Immeasurable Life; and we know that the life and light of Amida Buddha are both perfect, also that all other Buddhas attained their state by his aid. Therefore he is The Buddha."

"*Amida! Amida! Amida!*" ejaculated all present.

"The boundless mercy of Amida Buddha is extended to all creatures," solemnly continued the preacher; "and those who rely upon him will

attain perfection, and be re-born into the state of *Nirvana*. You need not trouble yourselves concerning other Buddhas, but rely only upon Amida. If you truly do this, you will escape from this miserable world, and enter Paradise in your next life. Once you have faithfully embraced the Shin doctrine, and firmly believe in the saving power of Amida, you need no longer be in fear of this or that god; but, remembering the great mercy of Amida Buddha, constantly invoke his holy name so that you may not forget him during one moment of your existence. This is termed thanksgiving for salvation."

"*Amida!*" piously ejaculated the congregation, worked into a state of exaltation by his eloquence. "*Namu Amida Butsu!*"

"Our sect knows no difference between *bozu* and layman," said Thunder Priest. "We priests eat and drink as you do, and consider the marriage state honourable for us. We know it is useless to pray for happiness in this life, to any Buddha, or even to Amida; because, believing in his power, the events of our lives cannot be altered by others, and he is certain to save us. We must be strict in our moral obligations, and, while loving one another, lead orderly lives, obey the commands of the great lords, and the instructions of those who are placed over us by them. I am your Living Master, not a Living Buddha; and you must rely upon Amida, and not upon me. *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

Bowing slightly, he rose, and retired to his private room; leaving the congregation to pay for the inscriptions on their *sotoba*, and to ponder over his words.

He was a strange mixture of good and bad; and, while hungering to make Hachisuba his wife, was, "though he walked upon a thread," anxious to remain a priest.

When she quitted the temple, he bade Koku-un secretly follow her, and ascertain where she lived and to whom she was married.

Hachisuba found old Cho-suke at the gate of the cemetery, and scolded him all the way home for interrupting the service.

That night she dreamed of Thunder Priest; but to her grief, just as they were about to speak, Takeyasu aroused her, saying,—

"I am cold all over. Rise, and make some water hot. I fear I am about to take a long journey."

She ground her teeth, and obeyed, and was not able to resume her slumber until the cocks began to salute the sun-goddess.

Thunder Priest was more fortunate; he having discovered that she was married to a childless old man, whose thread of existence was partly severed.

"Hachisuba! [Lotus-leaf]" he murmured, as he glanced at himself in the metal mirror. "Your name is as beautiful as your person. I will wait! After all, religion is not a bad profession. I will rely upon Amida. *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

CHAPTER IX

THREE SPIRITS SET OUT UPON THE LONELY ROAD, AND
MOUNTAIN-OF-SNOW CONVEYS A MESSAGE

HACHISUBA's visit to the Nameless Temple neither strengthened her good resolves, nor made her life cheerful; she alternately moping, and indulging in outbursts of temper with the servants: noticing which, Takeyasu called her to him, and said,—

"What is the cause of your twisted conduct?"

His wife bowed her face to the mat, and wept hysterically, but did not reply.

"You are a very eccentric woman," continued her husband. "I am most indulgent to you, and you have many costly robes. I cannot understand the cause of your hot and cold faces."

Hachisuba wept until she was unable to squeeze out another tear; then, drying her eyes upon her sleeves, sat up on her heels, and said between her sobs,—

"I am a most unfortunate creature! I went to the temple the other day, and discovered the true way of salvation; but I am not permitted to follow it."

"Is that the cause of your trouble?" quietly inquired Takeyasu. "I am glad that I know. Listen to me! It is not good for a young married woman to be haunting the temple. People are uncharitable, and some one might say that the priest was more attractive than the gods. After my younger brother returns, you and his wife and daughter can go to the Nameless Temple every day. Be reasonable, and assume a more cheerful manner."

While he was speaking, her eyes flashed like a serpent's; and when

he ceased, she cried, in a voice that could be heard in the kitchen,—

"Your younger brother! A—h!" bowing, and sucking in her breath satirically. "Why are you so afraid of him? There is a god in his house, that protects his family. You have a god on the shelf, who protects us. His god does not trouble himself about our affairs! Although you have not noticed it, I have for several days suffered great agony and desire to visit the Nameless Temple, that I may be cured by the prayers of the holy Living Master."

Takeyasu regarded her slyly, then said in a decisive tone,—

"There is an old proverb, 'The first cup always makes one feel thirsty.' As long as you remained at home, doing your duty, you did not worry about religion. Now that you have been bewitched by this miracle-working Living Master, you are dying to renew your excitement, to hear the sound of his voice and the music of the bell, and to sniff at the delightful perfume of the incense,—to all of which I say No! You, being young, have been allowed to use your tongue freely, and do many things I would not permit in an older woman. I command you to remain at home; and if you are greatly in need of religious aid, I will have no objection to your hearing the prayers of all the old begging priests who come this way. Dry your tears, and set a good example to my servants."

He spoke so sternly that his wife dared not retort, fearing he might kill her in his anger.

"I have pulled the cord too tightly," she thought. "He has felt it gall him. I will be more careful;" then, bowing respectfully, said,—

"Honourable husband, I repent. I know that I am young and foolish, while you are old and wise. As long as I live, I will never again vex you. Shall I make you some of that nice herb-tea?"

Her speech mollified his anger, and he answered as an old man does to a young wife.

That night Hachisuba wrote the following letter:—

TO EXALTED LIVING BUDDHA,

There are two ceremonies of *goma*. It is unnecessary to instruct the wise.

WITHIN THE SCREEN.

The next evening, while she was walking in the moonlit garden, a pebble wrapped in a paper fell at her feet; noticing which, she pretended to stoop in order to pluck a weed, and in doing so secured the communication, which read:—

"The pilgrim will soon start upon his journey."

Hachisuba secreted this in her girdle, then thought,—

"The priest can perform the rite of *goma* in a manner that will benefit a sick person, or give him a quick exit. Now, although I would like to wear the white robes of widowhood, I do not desire to prematurely cut the thread of my honourable husband's existence. To-morrow is *Hina Matsuri* [Feast of Dolls]. I will pluck some sprays of peach-blossom, and place them upon the doll-shelf. These old customs remind us of our childhood!"

She was cutting a branch, when a green lizard, sleeping upon it, crawled towards her, and touched her fingers; whereupon she gave a cry of disgust, and, shaking the spray, caused the reptile to drop into a bamboo conduit leading to

the rain-water receptacle in the rear of the house.

"*Oya!*" she exclaimed shuddering at the contact, and releasing the branch. "I hope it has not fallen into my sleeve-pocket. Ah, the horrible thing! It felt like the touch of a corpse." Cautiously searching her garments: "No, it must have dropped among the grass near the cistern. I feel as though my flesh were crawling over my bones. I will not decorate the doll-shelf this year."

Upon re-entering the house, she found everybody had retired for the night; so she followed their example.

Takeyasu rose at daybreak, and, quitting his room, walked in the garden; where he admired the flowering peach-trees, and thought,—

"How beautiful you are! After being confined for months to my apartment, I come forth stronger than ever, and am greeted with your loveliness!"

He went to the shed in which Mountain-of-Snow was confined, and called to the bird, which was still sleeping with its head under its wing. Upon hearing his voice, it awoke suddenly, and displayed the greatest joy at beholding him.

"*Hai!* you brave creature!" he cried, as he released the hawk, and permitted it to fly. "Though Chosuke has faithfully fed and tended you, I see you look thin through fretting after me. We will soon enjoy ourselves together, as in the old days."

Mountain-of-Snow took a short flight, then returning perched upon his master's wrist; and the old man, stroking it, said,—

"You are always the same,—ever ready and true. During my sickness, I have daily issued instructions for your treatment. *Hai, hai, hai!* You spread your wings, blink your

eyes, and snap your beak, as though you understood every word."

While he was speaking, Cho-suke, whose face beamed with delight, emerged from the kitchen, and, glancing round, saw the convalescent; then approaching him bowed, sucked in his breath respectfully, and said,—

"Honourable master, this sight makes me feel very happy! I congratulate you upon your complete restoration to health. I have made a cup of tea for you. Please come in and drink it while it is hot."

Takeyasu replaced the hawk upon its perch in the shed, and, after securing the door, followed the man, saying,—

"Your pleasure does not equal mine. I am ready for a cup of tea, which the physicians consider a good thing to strengthen the body against malarial troubles bred in the night-air. Your honourable mistress is asleep, or I would like her to enjoy the same benefit. Do not arouse her: she is young, and requires plenty of rest."

He entered the reception-room, and, squatting upon the floor, was served by Cho-suke; who, kneeling near him, said,—

"Seeing my honourable master well again is too much happiness for this stupid fellow. The water boiled quickly this morning; it was a lucky omen."

Takeyasu drained the cup, then pursing his lips murmured,—

"Curious taste."

"*Hai!*" ejaculated Cho-suke. "Honourable master, the medicine you have taken has changed your mouth."

"It burns my throat," said Takeyasu. "Help! Help! Cho-suke—I am poisoned!"

"*Hai!*" cried the man, in an alarmed tone, "poisoned?"

Takeyasu rose, and staggered into his wife's room, exclaiming,—

"Hachisuba! Hachisuba! Help! I am poisoned!"

Seizing her arm, he shook her, and repeated his cries until she awoke; when, rubbing her eyes, she said,—

"Poisoned?"

"Yes," faintly replied her husband. "I am about to start on a long journey."

"Go for the holy priest," said the thoroughly affrighted woman. "Cho-suke, do not stare like an ox! Go for the holy priest."

"Stop!" cried Takeyasu, half rising from the wadded quilt upon which he had fallen in his agony. "What good can a priest, or even a doctor, do me? I shall soon 'be numbered as nobody'! Listen to my last words. Tell my younger brother!"—

Before he could complete the sentence, he was seized with a severe convulsion which snapped the thread of his existence.

"I am sorry! Oh, I am sorry!" said Cho-suke. "I would willingly have died for my honourable master."

Hachisuba, who really felt shocked, and who believed that the servant had poisoned Takeyasu, ran to the neighbours, shrieking,—

"*Oya, oya!* Wicked Cho-suke has committed a crime! Look at my husband! He has become *Hotoke!*"

Everybody in the place flocked to the house, and loudly denounced the old man; who, kneeling reverently by the body, gazed fixedly at the pallid face, unconscious of what was said about him.

The village gossips—who, as is usual in such cases, were in an exalted condition—alternately prayed, and assisted in arranging the room; the contents of which were inverted, even to the screens, and the pictures on the walls. They brought in a low table, placed it before the body,

put evergreens in a vase, burned incense, and lighted candles for the benefit of the spirit of the murdered falconer; after which, they turned their attention to comforting Hachisuba, and to calling down the vengeance of the gods upon the unhappy servant.

"Ah, I am a miserable woman!" sobbed the widow, frantically beating her bosom. "Who could believe that Cho-suke would commit such a crime?"

Just then the head man of the village—who, upon any interesting occasion, always arrived late—entered the house, and, after hearing of the tragedy from everybody at once, said,—

"Before I report this to Lord Kiga, I will question Cho-suke. Who knows but that he is innocent?"

"Innocent!" shouted the neighbours. "Impossible!"

They all retired to the veranda; leaving Hachisuba in the reception-room, and Cho-suke still dumbly regarding his late master.

The head man of the village bowed respectfully, and said in a loud voice,—

"Old servant Cho-suke, listen to me! Was it you who poisoned your honourable master?"

Cho-suke turned his red eyes upon the speaker, then, bowing respectfully to the corpse, rose, entered the reception-room, and, kneeling, saluted his mistress and the assembly, but appeared utterly unable to reply.

"What poison did you give your honourable master?" demanded the head-man.

"I am sixty years old," said Cho-suke. "I have served my honourable master for thirty-five years, and he has never said a harsh word to me. How, I ask you,—how could I cause his death?"

"He is dead!" sobbed Hachisuba. "You poisoned him!"

"Honourable mistress," pleaded Cho-suke, "I only gave him a cup of tea."

"If every old man who drank a cup of tea in the morning died like my honourable husband, I could believe you," said Hachisuba.

"Relate the truth from the beginning," commanded the head man.

"When I heard my honourable master moving about," calmly replied Cho-suke, "I joyfully rose, and, proceeding to the rain-water cistern, filled the iron kettle, and set it on the fire to boil. I knew honourable master liked an early cup of tea. There is the teapot: give me some of its contents. If it contains poison, I did not put it there."

Hachisuba filled a cup with the hot liquid, and handed it to him. He cooled it with his breath, and, before raising it to his lips, solemnly said,—

"I tell you truly, I am innocent of any crime against my honourable master."

He drained the last drop, and was about to place the cup upon the tray, when it fell from his hand, and he began to gasp, clench his fingers, and tear at his garments; crying out as he did so,—

"Honourable mistress, have you any message for my honourable master?"

Hachisuba covered her face with her sleeves, and cowered in a heap on the mats, but did not reply; seeing which, Cho-suke, conquering his terrible agony, rose and moved towards the inner room, pausing before her, and saying,—

"Shall I tell my honourable master that you will cut off your hair, and become a nun?" Sternly: "Honourable mistress, I go before

you to announce your arrival in the land of spirits!"

He tottered forward, sank upon his knees by the side of the corpse, and, reverently bowing his head, died.

"He is a truly loyal servant," said the head man. "Where is the vessel in which the water was boiled?"

One of the neighbours brought a sieve, and the contents of the kettle were turned into it; whereupon they discovered the lizard, boiled like a fish.

"This is a very poisonous reptile," said the head man. "I cannot understand how it came in the kettle."

"I can," said the agitated widow, who was surrounded by sympathizing neighbours. "I shook it off my hand last night, and thought it had dropped upon the ground. It must have fallen into the bamboo pipe leading to the rain-water tank, and crawled into the latter, where it died. Cho-suke dipped the kettle before day had fully dawned, and did not see the horrible thing. If I had risen at the same time as my honourable husband, I should have shared his fate."

Everybody congratulated the widow upon her escape, and her old lady friend whispered,—

"Of course you feel deep sorrow at your honourable husband's sad fate, but it is doubtless the reward of evil deeds in his former existence. If he had embraced the true faith, he would not have died in this miserable manner, or, even dying thus, would have attained *Nirvana*. You know the old proverb, 'Do not hurry to rise early, as sleep confers many benefits.' Amida Buddha prevented you from opening your eyes before the sun had killed the bad influences."

"Ah! I shall be so lonely!"

sighed Hachisuba. "Now I have no one to protect me."

She spent the rest of the day sobbing and crying; while the neighbours, acting in her behalf, arranged for the funeral services, and cremation of the body.

At her request, the head man of the village reported the sudden death of her husband to his chief, and forwarded the remains of Cho-suke to the latter's relatives.

Lord Kiga expressed great regret at the sad news, and sent a runner to Omi to invite Takeakira to accept the place of his late brother.

When Hachisuba heard of this, she thought, "I must decide quickly. My honourable husband did not die through any act of mine. I have no sin upon my conscience. He was an old man, and could not have lived long under any circumstances. Now that I am free, I have no doubt but that Saikei—I should say Thunder Priest—will marry me. If I wait until that hateful Takeakira returns, the latter will gobble every thing."

She wore her white robes gracefully, and, when the neighbours called to sympathize with her, said,—

"I hear everybody talking about the wonderful gifts of Thunder Priest, and that spirits for whom he prays are almost certain of obtaining happiness. This is very important."

"Yes, very," they would murmur, as they closely scrutinized the texture of her mourning-robe. "Always secure a famous priest to say prayers for the dead."

Upon the sixth day after the tragedy, Hachisuba received a visit from the pious matron, who remarked,—

"To-morrow will be the seventh day after your honourable husband's death. Have you communicated with Thunder Priest?"

"I do not know him well enough to ask such a favour," said the widow, sighing. "I fear, though he performed the funeral rites, he will refuse to do any thing else. You know my honourable husband detested priests."

"*Hai!* but he was a *samurai*, therefore you must have the seventh-day prayers said for him. I will arrange the matter for you, and send a good orator to ask the favour of the holy Living Master. If you so desire, I will purchase the cakes and refreshments for the entertainment of your friends and neighbours."

"Please accept a hundred thousand thanks," answered the widow. "My servants can attend to the matter;" thinking to herself, "and save your commission."

That evening the old lady's son visited the temple, and was granted an interview with the Living Master; who, after slightly acknowledging the humble bows and deep respirations of the messenger, and patiently hearing the latter's request, said,—

"I usually decline to read the sacred books, and perform the rites of the seventh day, for those who are not members of my congregation. Still, when I am implored to aid the wandering spirit by such a pious woman as your honourable mother, I do my best to give comfort to the living. Inform your honourable mother, that I will visit the widow of the late Sir Ihara Taroga Takeyasu to-morrow evening."

The messenger listened with his face upon the mats, then bowing reverently rose, and ran home with the good news.

His mother received it with many expressions of joy; after which, dressing herself in white, she proceeded to call upon the widow, and to inform her of Thunder Priest's great benevolence; adding,—

"Now I am here, I will assist you in preparing the food for to-morrow's guests. Of course every thing will be conducted in the Shin manner. What amount do you desire to give in alms to the poor? and will you permit me to distribute it?"

Hachisuba gratefully resigned the conducting of the feast to the delighted old woman, who remained up nearly all night arranging the dishes, and instructing the servants in their various duties; while the widow dreamed of the Living Master, and never for an instant remembered the honourable husband in whose memory the house smelt like a cake-shop.

The next day she was busy from sunrise to nearly sunset, entertaining the neighbours and visitors who came to feast in memory of the dead falconer, and who, while enjoying themselves at her expense, expressed the deepest regret at her loss.

When the last alms were showered to the beggars at the gate, and the wine-bottles and cake-dishes were empty, the guests departed more or less irregularly; and the weary servants, seeking their much-needed rest, left the mistress of the house alone. She retired to her apartment, and, hastily changing her white robes for the garments she had worn at Kanzaki, entered the reception room, and, kneeling upon the mats, glanced at the peach-trees in the garden, and thought,—

"Was it through the poisonous reptile nourished upon your beautiful blossoms, that my honourable husband changed his world; or through the power of *goma* performed by Thunder Priest? I am now free! *Hai!* Nothing stands between me and him whom I worship. If he accepts me as his wife, I will obey and serve him in all

things, and never give him cause to regret his act. Ah! I am so happy in the anticipation of meeting him that I feel as though my spirit would burst its bounds!" Listening intently, and murmuring aloud: "He comes! Yes—'tis he!"

She clasped her hands over her heart, and waited with dilated eyes and parted lips for the repetition of the sound that had attracted her attention.

As she did so, the bell of the Nameless Temple, "reported sunset," and some crows in an oak-tree began to caw in a manner that checked her glowing thoughts, and made her flesh creep with apprehension; then she heard some one in the entry say,—

"How are you, my honourable elder brother? Your younger brother, Jirojiro Takeakira, has returned."

"*Oya, oya!*" she gasped, rising, and re-entering her room, where she hastily resumed her white robes, washed the powder from her face, and wiped the red pigment from her lips; then, advancing to where the speaker was waiting in "the mouth of the house," prostrated herself, sucked in her breath, bowed respectfully, and said in a sorrowful voice,—

"*Otogo* [younger brother], have you returned? Please enter this poor dwelling."

Takeakira, who at the first glance had noticed her mourning garb, felt certain that his brother had crossed the river of death, though he did not refer to it. Slipping off his straw shoes, he stepped up on to the floor, and, kneeling at a proper distance from Hachisuba, bowed his forehead to the mat, solemnly drew in his breath, and remarked,—

"The days are beginning to grow longer, and the warm weather is making the peach-trees very beauti-

ful. I hope that you are enjoying good health?"

His sister-in-law having replied in the correct way, he told her the sad particulars of his wife's death, and how he had been separated from his children.

Hachisuba listened attentively, frequently stopping to wipe the tears from her eyes; and when he ceased his narrative, she said,—

"You brothers are indeed unfortunate men. You, having lost your wife, and, though innocent of crime, being separated from your children, come a long distance to seek assistance from your honourable elder brother. Ah! he can no longer aid you. The thread of his existence was severed on the third day of this month."

She related the particulars of Takeyasu's death; upon hearing which, Takeakira beat his bosom, and wept red tears.

When he contrived to somewhat master his grief, he consoled with her, and said,—

"So this is the seventh day after my honourable elder brother has changed his existence? I shall at least have the happiness of praying for him."

After bowing respectfully to one another, they rose; and Hachisuba led the way into a small room containing the family altar, on which rested a memorial tablet inscribed with the posthumous name of the falconer.

Takeakira, who was profoundly moved, knelt before the altar, burned incense, and prayed silently for some moments; then, addressing the tablet, said,—

"Spirit of my honourable elder brother, hear me! I am crushed with grief, like a toad under the foot of an ox. I came here seeking your aid, as a child seeks its parent. I find your body resting in the

shadow of the tall grass. *Namu Amida Butsu !*"

He alternately prayed, and communed with his brother as though the spirit of the latter were present; his murmured invocations being plainly heard by Hachisuba, who was seated in the reception-room, beating her bosom, and moaning softly,—“Fate is merciless! When I was expecting a god, that demon made his appearance, and blighted my happiness! What shall I do?” In a hoarse whisper: “Hush! some one is approaching.”

At that moment Thunder Priest and Koku-un were advancing along the road, pausing before each gate in order to ascertain at which to enter.

The black-robed giant carried a pine-knot torch, and was several paces ahead of his superior; who, though most anxious to see Hachisuba, walked with solemn mien and downcast eyes. Presently the mock priest halted, raised his torch aloft, and, pointing to the register-board on which the names of all the inmates of the house were inscribed, grinned, and said in a low tone,—

“This is the right shop. See, there is the name of the old man. I will go forward, and announce you.”

Hachisuba, who was listening with parted lips and loudly beating heart, rose, advanced to the mouth of the house just as Koku-un reached it, and, signalling him not to make a noise, said in a low tone,—

“Whom do you announce?”

The giant approached her very closely, and replied, in a gruff voice intended for a whisper,—

“Nameless Temple has arrived. Understand?”

“Please bring the honourable Living Master into the reception-room,” she nervously observed. “My younger brother has just returned, and is praying at the

family altar. Ask the holy priest to enter.”

Koku-un, who could not forget his thief’s manners, crept back to his superior, and, thrusting the torch into the wet grass, said out of the left corner of his mouth,—

“Come along! It is all right. Ring your bell. The younger brother is here, and the house is as full of incense as a temple. This way.”

Hachisuba received Thunder Priest like a stranger, and, showing him into the reception-room, lighted the candles in the paper lantern, then putting a cushion for him in the place of honour, and one behind it for his attendant, said,—

“Honourable Living Master, I thank you for your great past kindness in performing the funeral rites for my honourable husband, and in coming here, upon this seventh day after his death, to pray for the benefit of his wandering spirit.”

Thunder Priest regarded her very tenderly, and she returned his gaze; but, hearing the murmur of Takeakira’s prayers, they checked their utterances.

Koku-un produced some candles, a hand-bell, and the sacred books, from his sleeve, and Hachisuba placed a low table before the priest; who proceeded with the ceremony, stopping occasionally to burn sweet incense.

His voice, musical as a flute, rose and fell in measured cadence, and fascinated the widow, who remained spell-bound as though in a dream; while the occasional tinkle of the bell presently reached the ears of Takeakira, who, pausing in his prayers, murmured,—

“I ought to be present at that ceremony.”

He rose, and, creeping to the reception-room, peered through the

spaces between the sliding doors, —where he remained as though glued to the spot, breathing hard, with his face as white as bean-curd.

At the conclusion of the rite, Hachisuba, who was unaware of Takeakira's presence, bowed to the priest, and presented him with a sum of money.

"Honourable Living Master," she said, "accept a hundred thousand thanks! Now I know that the spirit of my honourable husband will find rest. Will you permit me to offer you some poor refreshments?"

Thunder Priest bowed assent, while his companion thought,—

"I would like some of the *sake* that has been wasted here to-day;" then murmured in an absent manner, "*Amida! Amida! Amida!*"

As Hachisuba quitted the room to procure the cakes and tea with which to refresh her guests, she encountered Takeakira, who said in a low tone,—

"What priest is that who has performed seventh-day ceremony for my elder brother's benefit?"

"He is called Thunder Priest," she quietly replied. "He is the Living Master of the Nameless Temple. The ashes of your honourable elder brother are in the charge of that holy priest. Will you go in and entertain him?"

"*Hai!* I will," he hoarsely returned. "You did well to invite him here. I will entertain him like a *samurai!*"

He fetched his brother's long sword from its rack on the *tokonoma*, in the room containing the altar, and, thrusting it into his girdle, entered the room. Kneeling near the entrance, he bowed his face to the mat, drew a deep respiration, and said to the priest,—

"I am the younger brother of the man for whose wandering spirit

you have read holy books and performed rites to-night. I formerly lived in Seta in Omi, and my name is Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira. I am very glad, that, notwithstanding your presence is required every moment in your temple, you have graciously condescended to direct your holy feet to this mourning house."

Thunder Priest, who did not notice the sword in Takeakira's girdle, but imagined that the speaker was crazed with grief, bowed, sucked in his breath, and calmly replied,—

"So you are the younger brother of Sir Ihara Tarogo Takeyasu. I can readily understand how deeply you are affected at his loss. You have taken too low a position: come nearer to the *tokonoma*."

As he spoke, he moved one of the lamps, and for the first time beheld Takeakira's face; while the latter, rising upon his knees, glared at him, and, placing his hand upon the hilt of his sword, cried,—

"Strange meeting!"

"*Hai!*" ejaculated Thunder Priest, who, trembling like a dog, could not rise in order to escape. "Strange meeting!"

"*Hai!*" continued the indignant *samurai*. "You are the priest Saikei, who defrauded Tomosada, the salt-merchant of Obata, of an ox, and sold it to me; which wicked act led to the death of my honourable wife, and has cruelly separated me from my filial children. You are my enemy! I have sworn to find you, even if I had to cut all the trees upon the mountains, and burn every bush in the valleys. Now, when I unexpectedly discover you here, I will avenge the wrongs of my wife, my children, and myself. Although you are a Living Master, I will kill you!"

Speaking thus, with flashing eyes and determined air, he drew the

sword, and advanced towards the amazed priest; who, picking up a bronze incense-burner, hurled it at Takeakira, and, kicking over the lanterns, retreated behind a screen, leaving the room in complete darkness. As he did this, Koku-un, closely embracing the mats with his entire body, wriggled out of the apartment like a snake, and, escaping from the house, hid himself amid the shrubs in the garden.

Takeakira, who, though felled by the blow, still retained his sword, quickly sprang to his feet, and made a cut in the direction of his enemy; his glittering blade flashing like lightning in the darkness, but falling upon the air.

At that instant Hachisuba noiselessly entered the room, carrying a tray of cakes. Takeakira, hearing the quick breathing of Thunder Priest behind the screen, advanced a pace, and, delivering a swinging blow, cut her down like grass; while the priest, hearing her low cry of agony, sprang into the veranda, and ran with all speed toward his temple,—followed by Takeakira, who imagined that he had merely wounded his enemy.

Koku-un quickly rose from his crouching position, and started to the assistance of his superior; finally overtaking the *samurai* in the cemetery of the temple, and attacking him with a long *sotoba* plucked from the newly-made grave. At the same instant Haku-un came out of the building, and, securing a similar weapon, dealt Takeakira a severe blow upon the back of the head.

A desperate conflict followed, during which Thunder Priest, who had safely reached the temple, quietly secured Hachisuba's mirror and the money in the treasure-box, then escaped by a rear entrance; thinking, as he ran towards the village,—

“My feet can no longer rest here, now that my wickedness has been discovered. I am indeed unfortunate in meeting that hateful fellow, who has destroyed all my carefully arranged plans, and prevented me from ‘ascending the mountain of jewels’ [gaining a great prize].”

Upon arriving at the chief elder's residence, he knocked furiously at the gate, and shouted,—

“A robber has entered the Nameless Temple. Come quickly to our aid!”

This he repeated at each house, until he had aroused everybody; when he quickly descended the mountain, and “ate the wind.”

In a short time the chief elder, at the head of a large party armed with sickles and carrying lighted pine-knots, arrived at the cemetery, and, raising their torches aloft, waded among the graves and tall grass, shouting,—

“Where are the thieves?”

“Do not let them escape!”

“We are several strong hands come to help you!” Upon hearing them, the rascals ceased their attack; and Takeakira seeing by the advancing torch-lights that neither of them was his enemy, and not desiring to make any explanation that would be denied by the two *bozu*, sprang over the bamboo fence, and ran towards his late brother's home, thinking,—

“I believe, after all, my sword was washed with the blood of the wretch Saikei!”

When he reached the house every thing was in darkness, and he heard no sound; whereupon he called in a loud voice,—

“Honourable sister-in-law, will you please bring me a light?”

The bats squeaked as they flew hither and thither; and the moon, rising above the trees, threw its rays

into the reception-room, upon the floor of which lay a dark object.

Takeakira, who felt as though his liver were slowly shrinking, once more summoned his sister-in-law, then, stepping upon the veranda, entered the apartment, and discovered Hachisuba lying in a pool of blood.

"Ah!" he moaned, beating his breast, "I have missed my enemy, and have slain you without a witness!"

He knelt by the body, and regarding it sternly exclaimed,—

"I fear that I am too late!" Raising her head upon his knee, and glancing at her pale face: "Do not start for the yellow spring until I give you a message for my honourable elder brother. Honourable sister-in-law, can you hear me?"

Hachisuba half opened her eyes, and faintly answered,—

"I am about to change my world. What message can I convey to my honourable husband?"

Takeakira bit his lips, and ground his teeth, then said in a low, intense tone,—

"Tell my honourable brother's spirit, I found my hateful enemy, the priest Saikei, in his late house, and that you were entertaining him; tell him, in endeavouring to kill the wicked priest with his honourable sword, that I cut the thread of your existence: after which, pay your last respect to the spirit of your honourable husband, and descend to the lowest pit!"

Hachisuba, stung back to life by his reproaches, half rose, and, turning her ghastly face toward him, fiercely retorted,—

"Bitter words! Buddha knows the truth! I was unaware that Thunder Priest was your enemy! You have ever been one to me, now you desire to send my spirit to *ji-goku*! Ah! What have I done, that you should hate me thus?"

"Did you not know that Thunder Priest was the demon Saikei?" hoarsely demanded Takeakira.

The dying woman regarded him sternly, and, covering her wound with her left hand, faintly answered,—

"I will tell my honourable husband that you accidentally severed the thread of"—

She dropped upon her face, and "changed her world."

At that instant the moon retired behind a cloud; and a luminous matter, issuing from the corpse, floated out of the apartment, and, expanding like a sun, revealed in its centre a beautiful deer, the colour of which was an harmonious blending of red, white, brown, yellow, and black. The apparition remained for a few moments, after which the deer slowly nodded its head, its colours gradually faded, the rays of light contracted, and the mysterious ball floated away and vanished among the trees.

Takeakira, who had regarded the vision with awe-stricken face, knelt by the body of his sister-in-law, ground his teeth, grasped the flesh of his arms with his nails, and moaned with grief; then, recovering his speech, said,—

"Mysterious thing! Honourable elder sister-in-law, I have wronged you. Your spirit will, no doubt, be freed from further existences, and you will attain *Nirvana*. I will follow you quickly upon the lonely road."

He was about to use his sword, when he thought, "If I die without explaining this accident, I shall leave a dishonoured name, which my children will not be able to clear. After I have killed my enemy, I will deliver myself up to the authorities, and accept whatever sentence is passed upon me."

He prayed beside the body, and,

having awakened the drowsy servants, bade them watch by their mistress until he returned.

Upon arriving near the temple, he heard the villagers talking about the visit of the robber, and wondering how one man could scare away three holy priests; Koku-un and Haku-un having followed their master's example.

He did not care to make any communication to such stupid men, so sorrowfully returned to the house of the dead, where he found the servants prone on the mats, near their late mistress, snoring like demons. After arousing them with his feet, he directed the body to be washed, and wrapped in white cloth, and proper offerings to be placed before it; then, retiring to the room containing the family altar, he knelt and prayed. As he did so, he imagined that he beheld his children; whereupon his strong nerves, yielding to the terrible strain, gave way, and he wept like a woman. He beat his bosom, and invoking the spirits of his parents, and of all his family, whose tablets rested upon the altar, related the events of the night as though speaking to living beings, burnt incense in their memory, and bade them a respectful farewell.

At daybreak he wrote a long confession of his act, which he sent to Lord Kiga, then calmly awaited his sentence, passing the time in praying for his late brother and sister-in-law.

About noon he went to the shed in which Mountain-of-Snow was confined, and seeing that the bird moped, as though mourning for her master, said,—

"I was once told by my honourable mother that a wild goose delivered a message for Sobu; also, that a falcon, living on Mount Kokuaku, purged its future life of sin by killing

a white serpent. You hawks are valiant and honourable birds; and if during a cold night, you are given a sparrow with which to keep your paws warm, you never kill it, and, when it is released in the morning, will not that day hunt any bird in the direction it has taken.

"Even pigeons know how to honour their parents, and respectfully roost three branches beneath them: therefore a noble bird like you must understand the loyal duty. Though you have never received favours directly from me, I am the younger brother of your dead master, who greatly esteemed you. If you have a loyal heart, go to the castle of Kwannon-ji, in the province of Omi, and deliver my last message to my filial children.

"Faithful hawk, do you understand me?"

The bird's eyes flashed, and it fanned its wings as though anxious to execute his commands; its actions deeply affecting Takeakira, who thought,—

"This hawk shows the true spirit of loyalty, so I will not hesitate one moment."

He re-entered the house, and, procuring the writing-implements of his late brother, selected some sheets of exceedingly fine paper. Kneeling upon the floor of the room containing the family altar, he wrote a full account of his acts since he had parted from his children, also the details of the death of his elder brother and sister-in-law, and a minute description of Saikei; ending his epistle as follows:—

"You, Taye, and Tajikichi, will readily understand how my bosom is torn with grief, and will not rest either by day or night until my wrongs are avenged. This is my legacy. May the gods protect you!"

After carefully reading this, he rolled the light, soft paper into a tiny cylinder, and sealed it with his stamp; then returning to the shed, secured the package with strong silk to the left foot of the hawk, and, removing the leathern thong from its feet, said,—

"I trust to you the faithful delivery of my last message."

Mountain-of-Snow slowly bowed its head, as though comprehending his words, hopped from its perch to his wrist, spread its wings, and, soaring into the blue sky, was quickly lost to view.

CHAPTER X

THE FALLING PETALS OF THE CHERRY-BLOSSOMS GEM THE GRASSY MOUND

WHEN Lord Kiga received the confession of Takeakira, he ordered the latter to be arrested; and sent Sir Watari Nagatsuna, one of his councillors, to examine the corpse of Hachisuba, and see that it was cremated, and the proper rites performed for the benefit of her spirit,—all of which instructions were carefully executed.

He then summoned Sir Watari, and, after reading Takeakira's letter, said,—

"It is very evident that Thunder Priest and Priest Saikei are the same person, and that his wicked act in stealing the yellow ox has led to a serious train of evils; still, there being no witness to the killing of my late falconer's wife, her younger brother-in-law is accountable for her death, and must suffer. This he admits in his confession; but at the same time petitions that I will cause search to be made for the bad priest, so that the prisoner's name may be cleared from stain of guilt after he has departed to the yellow spring. I desire you will take charge of this matter, and ascertain what has become of that rascally *bozu*."

Sir Watari bowed, sucked in his breath, and replied,—

"I will make the most searching

investigation, and maybe learn something that will assist in clearing up the mystery of the woman's death, which was a most unfortunate affair for her younger brother-in-law."

He retired, and sent out runners to arrest the priest and the latter's associates, who were by that time far away from the Nameless Temple.

Finding it useless to make further search for them, he summoned the members of the congregation, whom he questioned concerning their late Living Master.

The chief elder bowed respectfully, and said,—

"Honourable chief councillor, although we do not know any thing about the childhood of holy Thunder Priest, we are all aware of his great piety, and the brilliancy of his attainments, of which we had many proofs,—notably when he calmed the troubled spirit of our late Living Master, and converted us all from the Jo-do to the Shin doctrine. He was always patient and gentle; and none of us ever saw him betray temper, even when sorely tried. We believe Sir Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira killed his honourable elder sister-in-law through hatred of her, because she changed her faith to Shin, and that he laid the blame upon

holy Thunder Priest in order to save his own life."

"This may be true," quietly remarked their interrogator. "But why have the priest and his companions eaten the wind? I find that before they departed, they cleaned the treasure-chest."

"The money was the property of the Living Master," said the elder, rubbing his chin, and opening his eyes as though amazed. "Still we none of us believe that honourable Thunder Priest took it. A man who will deliberately kill the widow of his honourable elder brother will not hesitate to rob a temple."

"*Hai, hai!*" from the crowd.

"Holy Thunder Priest only rested here at our urgent prayer. He has doubtless renewed his journey through the various provinces, in order to save souls."

"*Hai!*" very decisively from the pious old woman, who advanced and prostrated herself, then sitting up said,—

"I was a very intimate friend of the unfortunate lady, who often told me that her only enemy was her honourable husband's younger brother. I know she dreaded his return from Omi; and that last year he threatened her life, and behaved very savagely to her. Of course the holy Living Master did not care to stay in this miserable place, and 'dispute the black and white' with such a man: so he has wisely 'buried his track.' He was a most wonderfully gifted, holy priest, and we shall never again see his like up in this mountain. *Amida! Amida!*"

All the rest cried "*Hai!*" as with one mouth, and, bowing respectfully, said,—

"Younger brother purposely killed his honourable elder sister-in-law."

Sir Watari reported their speeches to his lord; who, after thinking the matter over, said,—

"Though I regret to sentence Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira, he, being a *samurai*, can die the honourable death, and need not be beheaded like a common person. I therefore direct him to commit *seppuku* [*hara-kiri*] at the Nameless Temple, as the old custom allows. See that this command is obeyed."

The next morning, Sir Watari, knowing the condemned *samurai* was poor, sent him a present of a pale blue costume and *kami-shimo* folded in a peculiar manner, and placed upon a white tray; upon receiving which, Takeakira calmly robed himself, and awaited the final summons.

About noon a retainer of the fourth grade, attended by four others of lesser rank, entered his cell, and, bowing respectfully, requested him to accompany him.

Takeakira politely returned their salutation, then quitted the *yashiki*, preceded by the first-mentioned official, guarded by the others, and followed by a councillor of the second class, who wore both his long and short sword. He walked with a firm step and proud mien, and conversed pleasantly with his guards about the beautiful weather.

They moved at a brisk pace, and, ascending the hill, passed up the avenue of the Nameless Temple, and beyond it to a lovely spot filled with cherry-trees in full bloom, through which a mountain torrent rushed with a musical sound.

The party halted near a space enclosed with white screens, bearing the crest of Lord Kiga, overhanging which was a superb cherry-tree that resembled a mountain of snow. Takeakira, saluting it, said,—

"I worship you! This is indeed a great happiness! [meaning that he was about to end his life beneath it.] Your snowy blossoms remind me of the silvery scene near the temple of

Hakone, that so delighted me last winter."

The prisoner then borrowed writing-materials from the councillor, and wrote:—

"Beautifies the high mountain,

What?

Gems the grassy mound [grave],

What?

The glorious cherry-blossom."

He handed this poem to the *samurai*, who received it reverently, and, pressing it to his forehead, said,—

"It shall some day be delivered to your filial children."

Takeakira smiled, and, bowing, replied,—

"My gratitude shall live long after I am numbered as nobody."

The four attendants hitched up their trousers so as to leave their limbs free; and the procession reformed and entered the curtained enclosure, where they saw a pile of furred skins placed facing the north, ready for the prisoner; Takeakira—having been one of Nitta Yoshisada's retainers, who was permitted to have an armour-bearer—being allowed to die according to the old custom, when skins of animals were used instead of straw mats.

When he had taken his place, he made a signal to the councillor who was to act as his second, and the latter reported to someone outside; then a retainer of the fourth rank brought in a camp-stool, which he placed at a certain distance in front of the mats, and fetched a bucket of water and a dipper, and set them down behind the camp-stool. Having done this, he respectfully bowed and retired.

As the bell of a neighbouring temple announced the hour of the Horse [noon], Sir Watari entered the enclosure, and took his seat upon the camp-stool; the retainer follow-

ing with a *sambo* [small stand of white wood] upon which a dirk, wrapped about with paper, was laid.

This he placed close to the skins, in front of and within easy reach of the condemned man, who was saluting Sir Watari by bowing, and sucking in his breath.

Every one was in his proper place and in a respectful attitude; and no sound was heard but the babbling of the brook and the rustling of the leaves.

After a brief pause, Sir Watari drew a scroll from his bosom, and read the death-sentence; at the conclusion of which, Takeakira bowed respectfully, and said,—

"I acknowledge the justice of the decision, and am grateful for the kind command that permits me to die this honourable death."

He sat up on his heels, and, slipping his *kami-shimo* from his shoulders, opened the neck of his under-garment.

As he did so, his second, who stood behind him, moistened the rivet of his sword, and prepared to draw it swiftly.

Then Sir Watari said,—

"Lord Kiga and all of us sympathize with you in your misfortune, and admire the true nobility that prompted you to confess your guilt. If you have any message for your children, I will convey it to them."

Takeakira respectfully acknowledged this kindness, and quietly replied,—

"This body of mine has experienced nothing but misfortune, and I have never been able to attain what I most earnestly desire. My only regret in changing my state is that I cannot eat the flesh of that wicked priest [literally hack him to pieces]. I am comforted to know that my dutiful children are safe under the protection of a certain

man, and will not die of starvation ; still, when they hear of this, they will feel discouraged. If they come here, tell them that I died as I have lived, and encourage them to avenge my death. This is my last desire in my present life."

Sir Watari was greatly moved by this speech, and the eyes of all present were dimmed ; while the cherry-tree overhead, shivering in the breeze, dropped myriads of petals like sympathetic tears.

Takeakira calmly watched the beautiful shower, then said in a firm voice,—

"The long-delayed meeting is now about to occur. I go to join the spirits of my honoured lord, Nitta Yoshisada, and his loyal retainers."

He reached out his hand, and, taking the dirk from the *sambo*, said to his second,—

"I trust to your friendly assistance."

In another instant he had inserted the blade, and was about to widen the cut, when the spectators heard some one riding furiously, on the other side of the brook, and beheld the chief councillor of Lord Kiga advancing rapidly as though bearing an important despatch.

When he reached the stream, he shouted,—

"I bring a message from my lord. Do not pull the blade to the other side for a moment !"

The horse jumped the rivulet, and landed near the enclosure ; and the rider, dismounting like a flash, approached, panting, and said,—

"Lord Kiga sent me hither to ask questions of Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira. Can I do so? The matter is of the greatest importance."

Sir Watari bowed assent ; whereupon the chief retainer approached Takeakira,—who remained quite motionless, holding the dirk in

the wound,—and whispered in his ear,—

"Your honourable elder brother was famous for his skill as a falconer, and knew the wonderful herb used in curing wounded hawks. Has he bequeathed the secret to you? If you know it, make an effort, and communicate it to the world, and thus confer a great benefit. I was sent by my lord to obtain this precious knowledge. I would like to hear your answer soon."

Takeakira, who had bravely controlled his terrible agony, panted several times, then said in a low tone,—

"I never learned how to train hawks, having no liking for the sport. My honourable elder brother did not impart the secret to me. However, remembering the many great kindnesses shown to my honourable elder brother by his lord, and that I have sent a message to my children by Mountain-of-Snow,—a noble hawk bestowed by his excellency Lord Kiga upon my honourable elder brother,—I will not neglect my duty. If my name is to be cleared after I have changed my state, and my children are to be permitted to avenge my wrongs upon my enemy, visit my grave seven days from this, and you will find a miraculous plant growing upon it. That—will—be—the—wonderful—medicine—for—hawks."

He drew the blade upward, and said,—

"Now, honourable assistant !"

The sword of the latter flashed in the sunlight, and in another instant Takeakira's head was severed from his body.

Thus, "when forty years of precious age," died Sir Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira, expiating by this honourable end his former lack of courage in not dying with his chief.

After the usual ceremonies of

identifying the head, etc., and incensing the remains, the latter were conveyed to the cemetery of the Nameless Temple, and buried in the presence of Sir Watari; who enjoined the villagers to carefully watch the grave, then made a minute report to Lord Kiga.

The latter ordered a tomb to be erected, and inscribed with the military name and title of the deceased, which was done at once; and in a few days the falling petals of the cherry-blossoms were piled like snow-rifts on the ledges of the monument.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

The honourable death of Takeakira atoned for his error in disloyally abandoning his heroic chief, Nitta Yoshisada, for which crime the gods pursued him to the end. There was also a most extraordinary circumstance connecting the lives of Takeyasu, Takeakira, and Hachisuba, which will be explained hereafter. One thing is certain: miserable as was Takeakira's burden of life, it was lightened up by the devotion of Taye and Tajikichi, the remembrance of whose filial love enabled him to die as a *samurai* should.

Children who honour their parents are favoured by the gods, and respected by the world.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER XI

AN IMPORTANT SECRET IS MIRACULOUSLY REVEALED

LORD KIGA felt greatly chagrined at the inability of Takeakira to divulge the secret concerning the medicine for hawks, and showed his feelings in his face. He also daily despatched his chief councillor to the Nameless Temple, to ascertain whether the plant had made its appearance; each time receiving this reply,—

“There is nothing on the tomb but a covering of cherry-blossoms, and no appearance of a strange plant near it.”

On the morning of the great seventh day, the chief elder of the temple, going early to the cemetery, made a discovery that caused him to run like a deer to Sokokura, and to seek audience with the chief councillor, whom he thus addressed,—

“Honourable chief councillor, I have watched the grave day and night, and seen nothing but numerous petals of cherry-blossoms, that appeared to fly towards it from all quarters. This morning they have

vanished like dew, and a plant about two feet high has sprung up on both sides of the tomb. It is covered with a mass of thick young leaves, and bears many flowers.”

He sucked in his breath, bowed low, and remained with his forehead close to the mat.

When this was reported to Sir Kiga, the latter said,—

“Faithful man! he has kept his promise. I will go and inspect the plant, and thus assure myself of his loyalty.”

He ordered his horse, and, springing into the saddle, galloped to the cemetery, followed by his chief councillor, Sir Watari, and three other councillors.

Upon arriving at the avenue, he dismounted, and, hastening through the dank grass, presently reached an open space in which was a tombstone inscribed:—

IHARA TAKEAKIRA NO HAKA.

[“Tomb of Ihara Takeakira.”]

One of his attendants placed a camp-stool for him, and the chief councillor stood on his left, while the others crouched near by.

Sir Kiga, glancing earnestly at the plant, said in a voice husky with emotion,—

“Strange thing!”

“It is considerably taller than when the elder saw it,” remarked the chief councillor.

“Strange thing!” once more ejaculated the lord, “I know that plant well, with its long, slender leaves opposite each other, like a river-willow, and yellow blossoms on the stems between the foliage. I can perceive its perfume from this distance. It is commonly called *oto-kiri-kusa* [younger-brother-cut plant or grass]. In the ancient times, during the life of the retired Mikado Kuasan, there lived a famous falconer named Haru-yori, who could cure any hurt or disease of hawk or falcon by using the crushed leaves of a certain herb, the name and properties of which had been revealed to him in a dream by Yakushi Butsu [Buddha the medicine-master]. The falconer, who guarded his secret carefully, once fell sick, and, believing he was about to change his world, whispered the name of the plant to his younger brother; who, having a weak tongue, let the matter leak out. When Haru-yori recovered, and learned the truth, he charged his brother with his perfidy, and, upon the latter denying it, killed him; after which the plant was termed *oto-kiri-kusa* [the plant about which younger brother was cut down]. Some people declare it is the same as *Shion*, but I say No! Look at it! There is not the slightest resemblance between them. It is marvellous that this secret has been revealed to us through the death of a younger brother. Strange thing!”

He ordered water, *shikimi*, and incense to be brought, and placed in the receptacles prepared for them in the monument; then, after making an offering to the spirit, returned to his camp-stool, and seating himself, said,—

“It gratifies me, that, even in the land of spirits, my old retainer is loyal, and that he has communicated his secret to the spirit of his younger brother.—Listen, Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira! Although I cannot bring you back to life, I accept you fully as my retainer, and rank your elder brother and yourself the same as my chief councillor. I hereby promise to do my utmost to clear your good name, and will assist your children in their loyal duty of avenging you.”

At that moment a rumbling noise emanated from the tomb; then a thin, bluish flame ascended from the left side of the stone, and, mounting high into the air, burst into a blaze, and vanished.

While the noble and his councillors were watching this apparition, a young priest approached, and, halting near a tree, muttered to himself,—

“My temple appears to be in ruins. I wonder what Lord Kiga and his councillors are doing at that new tomb.”

While he was waiting irresolutely, a number of the villagers, who had followed him, and had halted at the entrance to the cemetery, shouted,—

“Ye! Are you not the priest who ran away from the ghost of the late Living Master of this temple? You must have a thick skin on your face to return in this manner. We cannot see your blushes!”

The *bozu* smiled, and replied in a gentle manner,—

“It is true that I was frightened by the ghost of the old Living Master, but that was not the sole reason

why I quitted the temple. Permit me to explain."

Lord Kiga, overhearing this conversation, sent a councillor to summon the priest and villagers before him; then said to the former,—

"How is it that you abandoned this temple without giving a reason to the congregation?"

The *bozu* bowed, and sucked in his breath very respectfully, then replied in the same gentle fashion,—

"I am a very stupid priest, and was elected Living Master only a few weeks before I so suddenly quitted my temple, and therefore had no opportunity to pay my respects to your honourable presence; so you do not know me. I will tell you the true reason why I left the place.

"Before the late Living Master changed his world, he was greatly distressed concerning some money he had placed with one of the congregation; which circumstance was known to a young priest attached to the temple, who, when I was appointed Living Master, solemnly denied any knowledge of the matter, and, when the ghost first appeared, made good use of his crane-like legs.

"Soon after this, I heard that he was hiding in the mountain regions; and I sent messengers in search of him, without any result.

"Among the priest's papers I found one from which I learned that my charges against the runaway were true. This document directed me to obtain the money from him, and expend it in restoring the stone steps of the temple. I left here one night some months ago, after being ordered to do so by the ghost; and, as the matter required haste, did not stay to mention it to the congregation."

Upon hearing this speech, the

chief elder and the rest of the villagers averted their faces, grimaced, and coughed behind their hands. The young priest did not notice this, but continued in the same simple manner,—

"I had a long chase from mountain to mountain, then heard he had fled to Daigahara in the province of Kai, towards which place I turned my weary feet. Upon arriving at Kurokoma, I was seized with hemiplegia, and lost the use of my tongue; so the keeper of the hotel at which I was staying, having no way of ascertaining from whence I came, reported my case to the head man of the town, who took charge of my money, and was responsible for me until I recovered.

"I left Kurokoma two days ago, with the head man and the proprietor of the hotel. Yesterday, as we were resting in a deep wood, two rascally looking priests halted under the trees by the roadside; and, not knowing we were there, one of them, a giant, said,—

"'We lived like great lords in the Nameless Temple of Sokokura, did we not?'

"'Hai!' answered the other, who was short and stout. 'We frightened those pigeons out of the temple; and, until Thunder Priest was attacked by that woman's younger-brother-in-law, our skins never knew a wrinkle.'

"'Hai!' said the giant in a sad tone. 'A bad thing always comes after a good one. Here we are once more scratching our food off the sides of the mountain! You know the old proverb, "The mountain robber always ends his life where he has earned his living."'

"'Hai, hai, hai!' said the little one. 'Old proverbs are very precious to old women. Suppose we steal a boat, and turn pirates. We need not stick here like burrs. I propose we visit Miyako or Michi-

noku. Although Thunder Priest has buried his tracks, there are plenty of soft-livered people left in Japan. You and I will never starve through fear of blowing aside a hair from a victim's head, or admitting the air into a traveller's body. It is well we hid our swords, and did not sell them as directed by Thunder Priest. Our black robes will enable us to pass anywhere.'

"Both of them lay on the grass, and roared with laughter over the trick they had played me and the congregation of the Nameless Temple."

"*Naru-hodo!* [Is that so!]" moaned the villagers who had jeered him, but who now looked very sheepish; "*Naru-hodo!*"

"Why did you not arrest the robbers?" demanded Lord Kiga. "You were three to two."

The priest thought a while, then blandly replied,—

"I urged the head man to seize them, and promised great benefits to the innkeeper if he would secure the rascals; but they shook like leaves in the wind, and whispered that it was not their business, they being out of their district."

"And had you no power over the thieves?" demanded the lord.

"I said *Namu*," innocently answered the *bozu*. "They evidently did not hear it; for, after emptying a stone bottle which one of them produced from his knapsack, they rolled over like water-oxen, and went to sleep;" adding naively, "then we walked softly away."

"*Hai!*" murmured the villagers; "*hai, hai!*"

At that instant the head man of Kurokoma and the innkeeper made their appearance, and advancing bowed, and said,—

"We confirm the words of the honourable priest."

Lord Kiga, who regarded the

new-comers with great contempt, rose, and quitting the place left Sir Watari to decide the question between the priest and the congregation; which, after hearing much talk on both sides, he did as follows:—

"You, members of the congregation, have not only been bewitched by that wicked priest Saikei,—or Thunder Priest as you term him,—but have, in your blindness, falsely accused the honourable *samurai* whose body rests beneath that tomb. You were worse than oxen, to address a robber with a slippery tongue as a Living Buddha!"

"*Hai!*" moaned the pious old lady, who formed one of the audience. "I always doubted the sincerity of Thunder Priest, and feared he might desire to make me his wife!"

Sir Watari's mouth twisted; and, checking her with a motion of his hand, he said,—

"He was no doubt greatly admired by the women of the congregation. Listen to me: It was a grievous mistake for this young Living Master to run away, even though he went in search of a thief—which I doubt!"

"*Hai!*" ejaculated the penitent *bozu*. "I was very stupid to leave without reporting my object to the people. I have done a great wrong. *Namu Amida Butsu!*" After uttering these words, he wept copiously.

"You were just as foolish," sternly continued Sir Watari, addressing the villagers. "You ought to have had more sense than to offer the seat of Living Master to a tramping priest. Ah! Your shallow minds and ox-like habits have brought great misery upon an honourable man. As you cannot call him back to life, you must make reparation to his spirit."

"You, priest, must remain in the Nameless Temple, and subsist on the

accumulating contributions of your congregation. You will also, upon the various anniversaries, perform memorial service for the benefit of the spirit of Sir Ihara Jirojirō Takeakira, keep his tomb in order, and not expect any fee for your services.

"You, villagers, will unite to restore the temple, and will pray continually for the salvation of the loyal *samurai* whose death was brought about by your false words; and thus make reparation for your sin.

"If either of you neglect these commands, you will be severely punished."

Having pronounced sentence, he returned to Sokokura, leaving the priest and congregation like a house shaken by an earthquake.

After a while the chief elder, addressing the head man of Kurokoma and the innkeeper, bowed and said,—

"When everybody eats pickled *daikon* [a highly perfumed radish], nobody can make any complaint. We have fallen into the same pit as our honourable Living Master, so had better bury our reproaches." Addressing the priest: "Living Master, we will obey you in all things."

They gave presents to, and entertained, the men who had befriended him; then sent them back to the province of Kai.

Lord Kiga made every endeavour to ascertain the whereabouts of Taye and Tajikichi, whom he desired to adopt as his own children; but, being ignorant of their address, was unable to carry out his benevolent intentions. Even the councillor, who received the poem written by

Takeakira, did not know their place of residence.

The plant that so miraculously grew upon the loyal *samurai's* grave was found to be the true *oto-kiri-kusa*, and the wounds and diseases of many hawks were cured by it; finding which, Sir Kiga ordered it to be transferred to his private garden and carefully guarded day and night.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

In the sixteenth volume of a work called *Echigo Nayose*, I find that *oto-kiri-kusa* grows freely in the fields and near dwellings in the province of Echigo. It generally blooms late in the summer, and springs from the old roots many years in succession. The purple juice of the crushed leaves is a good remedy for boils, bruises, and all wounds of men and animals.

There is a pigment, imported from Korea, termed *sho-yen-shi*, used in dyeing cotton. The juice of *oto-kiri-kusa* is also used for that purpose.

In the book termed *Honzo-yenshi*, are found many receipts for making *beni* [colour for the lips, and dyeing] from the juice of several flowers; also, the secret of manufacturing artificial *sho-yen-shi* from the juice of boiled sapan-wood.

Sho-yen-shi possesses the virtue of stopping a flow of blood.

Kibara says in his book *Honzo shitsusoka*, that the plant *jakanso* closely resembles *oto-kiri-kusa*.

In a work called *Taiyoshi*, two kinds of *oto-kiri-kusa* are mentioned,—one coarse plant, weak in virtue; and the other small and fine, termed *hime-oto-kiri-kusa*, which has very great healing qualities.

I mention this because such useful knowledge ought to be widely distributed, and on account of having omitted to do so in a chapter on *oto-kiri-kusa* in my book called *Hai-kai-sai-yiki*. The virtues of the herb, which were little understood by the ancients, are now widely known by many people; therefore, in these days, a younger brother can refer to the plant without fear of being despatched upon a long journey.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER XII

THE BEAUTIFUL HAWK, MOUNTAIN-OF-SNOW, CHANGES ITS WORLD

SIR YAMADA NORIMICHI, who had become as much attached to Taye and Tajikichi as though they were his adopted children, spared no expense in order to give them a thorough education; while they, gratefully responding to his kindness, proved most diligent and apt scholars.

He personally instructed the girl in the use of the halberd, and taught the boy archery, riding, and sword exercise; and, when the cherry-trees were about to bloom, found that Tajikichi was a match for any warrior in the clan.

While the tragical events described in the last chapter were occurring in the province of Sagami, the young people were enjoying a peaceful existence in the castle of Kwannon-ji, and looking forward to the time when they should hear that their father had cleared his name of the stain cast upon it by the wicked priest.

On the day Takeakira despatched Mountain-of-Snow with the letter, Sir Yamada said to Tajikichi, "Have the target set up, and the mat spread, in the garden. I will see whether you can shoot as well as you can use your sword. Taye shall accompany us, and make tea; and I will give my pet skylark a little exercise."

The bird had been reared in the castle, and tamed by the councillor, who valued it very highly.

The boy, delighted to have an opportunity of showing his skill, took his bow, and accompanied his protector to the spot where the target was erected. He slipped his garments off his left shoulder, seized his bow with that hand, and, fitting an arrow with his right, landed it

exactly in the centre; following the shot with six others, all of which struck near the first.

Taye, who was busy fanning the charcoal under the copper vessel in which the water was boiling, said,—

"You are a good archer! If you always shoot in that fashion, it will be bad for the priest."

"I think of him whenever I drive a shaft," replied her brother. "Give me his black robe for a target, and I will make a centre every time."

He smiled as he spoke; then, laying his bow upon the mat, watched Sir Yamada fly his skylark.

The councillor released the bird from its cage, and, still keeping it perched upon his finger, said,—

"Now take a good flight, and sun your wings."

At this command, the lark sprang aloft, and, uttering a joyful note, soared out of sight, singing as it flew.

The party watched until it became a mere speck in the sky; when Sir Yamada and Tajikichi, knowing that the bird would soon return to its cage, began a trial of skill.

Their arrows flew thick and fast, and neither had gained any advantage; when Taye, glancing upward, uttered a cry of horror, and in another instant they beheld the skylark hastening towards them, pursued by a large spotted hawk, which struck its prey as it neared the target.

"Shoot!" cried Sir Yamada to the boy, who had an arrow fitted to his bow.

The shaft transfixed the bird, which, in its death-agony, drove its talons through the body of its victim; and both of them, tumbling to

the ground together, calmly changed their world.

Sir Yamada, while grieving for his pet, could not help admiring the grand swoop of the hawk. He lifted it up, and examined it critically; then said,—

"This is a glorious creature, though it has done me a great injury. It is like the hawk of the king of Sho, which had such a broad breast, that, when it was viewed from the front, its wings were hidden. It is recorded, that its plumage resembled silk, and its eyes shone like stars. Do you not notice what a refined, noble head this has, and how carefully its talons have been kept? I regret the death of my skylark, yet I am more sorry that I ordered you to kill this grand bird. My quick temper has made me commit a very foolish act."

Tajikichi, who sadly regarded his victim, drew his arrow from its body, and said in a mournful voice,—

"It was my lack of skill that caused this noble hawk to change its world. Had I known its value, I would only have broken its wing, and thus have saved its life and that of your pet lark. I am sorry! I am sorry!"

"Ah!" sadly ejaculated Taya; then, noticing the scroll, added, "What is that tied to its leg?"

Her brother cut the silk cord, and, seeing the seal, exclaimed,—

"This is a letter from our honourable father! I have killed his loyal messenger!"

As he spoke, he reverently pressed the scroll to his forehead, then, removing the fastening, read a few words; when big tears dropped from his red eyelids, and his bosom heaved with grief.

After a moment, he controlled his emotion, and said,—

"Honourable elder sister, this is from our honourable father,—

written when he was about to start upon the lonely road."

Sir Yamada, whose face expressed the sympathy he felt, retired to the castle; leaving the children to read the communication, which they did respectfully, with their faces close together and their tears commingling.

Then, knowing that their father, though innocent, would have to suffer for the crime of killing his elder sister-in-law, they bowed their heads to the arrow-littered mat, and prayed that he might be permitted to die the honourable death; after which they took the letter to Sir Yamada, and respectfully begged that he would permit them to go in search of the priest Saikei.

The councillor listened attentively, and said,—

"The noble hawk, imbued with the true spirit of loyalty, brought this letter from a great distance; while we, ignorant of its virtue, saluted it with an arrow. Doubtless this was a decree of Heaven, and you must remember that your father's fate arises from a like cause. Still it is your duty to avenge his wrongs."

The children wept bitterly, and, beating their bosoms, cried,—

"We will kill that bad priest! We cannot live if we do not."

After their tears were exhausted, Tajikichi, reverently folding the letter, said,—

"Honourable councillor, it is through your benevolent kindness my elder sister and myself are not wandering in the streets like beggars. We reverently regard you as our parent or teacher. Your mercy is as deep as Lake Biwa. We are the unhappy orphans of murdered parents, and are ignorant of the whereabouts of our enemy; and I have shot the hawk of our honourable uncle, that brought my father's

last message. The loyal bird did not forget its duty, neither must we. Kindly permit us to go to Sokokura, and ascertain the particulars of our honourable father's death; also, to seek out our enemy. Will you permit us to depart at once?"

Sir Yamada listened patiently, with half-closed eyes moistened with tears; then replied,—

"Your grief is reasonable, but it will be foolish for you to visit Sokokura. Your enemy is not there: besides, you might be insulted by the ignorant people, as the children of the man who murdered his honourable elder sister-in-law. Rest assured, virtue will be rewarded, and vice punished. If you keep your duty in view, you will some day learn the whereabouts of Saikei, the Thunder Priest.

"Remember, the Soga brothers waited eighteen years before they could accomplish their purpose; and, without the aid of the Hojo, they would never have succeeded in killing such a powerful enemy as Suketsune.

"If you leave this place, by whose aid do you expect to fulfil your desire?"

"Intrust your affairs to me."

The children bowed their faces to the mats, and respectfully drew in their breath, then said as with one voice,—

"Honourable councillor, we will in all things obey you, exactly as though you were our parent."

Sir Yamada, who greatly admired the loyal spirit of the hawk, directed that it should be buried with the same ceremony as a human being.

The servants deputed to perform this task conveyed the dead bird to a field near the castle, and proceeded to dig a hole; in doing which they struck a hard substance, that proved to be a very ancient image of Kwannon.

When this was shown to Sir Yamada, he consulted an aged priest; who, on seeing it, said,—

"Miraculous occurrence! but I can explain it. You remember hearing of a famous *bozu*, named Setsusan, who lived on Mount Iwato, and daily read the sacred scrolls, and prayed that he might be enabled to rebuild the temple of Kwannon. He was the custodian of this sacred image, which mysteriously disappeared at his death. No doubt his spirit temporarily inhabited the body of the snowy hawk; and this Kwannon has re-appeared in its grave, to show that the spirits of Motoye and Takeakira have met, or will meet, in the world of shadows.

"You must build a shrine near the grave; install the sacred image, and the tablets of Takeyasu, Takeakira, and Motoye, in it; erect a stone inscribed *Rei-o tsuka* [spiritual hawk's tomb], and perform suitable services in memory of the loyal bird and the three relatives of the filial children. This act will bring you great happiness now and hereafter."

Sir Yamada pledged himself to do what the priest commanded; and, before the moon was full, both tomb and shrine were completed and dedicated.

Taye and Tajikichi went every day to pray for the salvation of their parents, uncle, and Mountain-of-Snow. They also offered up many petitions to Kwannon, that they might soon be permitted to stand face to face with their enemy.

When Lord Sasaki heard of this, he requested Sir Yamada to make a full report to him; and, upon learning what thereader knows, he sighed, and said, "The wicked acts of the priest Saikei have brought great misery upon many innocent beings, changing the existence of an honourable mother and a loyal man and hawk, and of three other persons;

while he roams the country, laughing in his sleeve. This must not be permitted. I will take the children under my protection; and hereby command you to find the priest, and assist Taye and Tajikichi to accomplish their revenge."

Sir Yamada told his *protégés* of the noble's merciful kindness; whereupon they bowed their faces to the ground, sucked in their breath, and said,—

"The benevolence of our lord is boundless as the sea. We will never rest until we are so skilful that even Thunder Priest cannot defeat us."

They practised the art of war, Taye vying with her brother; and soon their wonderful ability in the use of all weapons was the admiration of the clansmen, and the topic of conversation in many provinces.

One day Tajikichi came to his sister, and, proudly exhibiting a bow of mulberry and some arrows of mugwort, said,—

"These were given to me by Sir Yamada, as a prize for shooting from the saddle. It is said that even demons cannot resist such weapons."

Taye minutely examined the gift, and replied,—

"A good omen! A good omen! Let us place them before the tablets of our honourable parents; and,

when the happy moment arrives, their spirits can assist you. Six hands will hold the bow, and six, drawing the string, will release the arrow, and send it like a flash of lightning through the heart of our hated enemy! Though I am only a woman, I hope to some day aid in severing the thread of his existence. If I am permitted to accomplish that filial act, I will cut off my hair, and become a nun."

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

In ancient times, when a male child was born, a bow of mulberry and an arrow of mugwort were placed in his hands; the act symbolizing a desire that he might grow up to be a wise, strong, and loyal man.

The mulberry is a sacred tree, and many books have been written concerning its great virtues. There are two kinds,—one cultivated for the sake of its leaves, upon which silkworms are fed; and the other, a tough, wild variety, growing on mountains, used in making bows and catapults.

Mugwort is a plant of many virtues, among which is the power of repressing a rebellion: it is therefore an emblem of loyalty. Its leaves are used for moxa, and its light stem for the shafts of arrows.

I have respectfully questioned many old warriors concerning this, and they all agreed in ascribing wonderful power to the weapons made of these substances.

Such information is reliable.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER XIII

A MORNING CLOUD ON KAGAMI-YAMA [MIRROR MOUNTAIN]

SAIKEI, the Thunder Priest, fleeing from the sword of Takeakira, wandered hither and thither "like a dog of a house of mourning;" finally making his way to his native province, where he skulked amid the mountains.

There is an old proverb, "The place of one's birth attracts us as a loadstone does iron." It was this irresistible feeling that caused Saikei to re-visit Omi.

One morning when he reached the foot of Kagami-yama, he seated

himself, opened his knapsack, took out the metal mirror, and gazing upon it regarded his face, saying,—

"I would give a year of my existence to know the fate of the former owner of this treasure. I fear the swift cut intended for me fell upon her beautiful form. Still women can survive very severe wounds: and she may by this time have fully recovered, and be anxiously waiting my return."

While he was fixedly regarding his reflection in the polished surface, the latter suddenly became clouded; and, in place of his smooth face and unshaven head, he beheld the image of a beautiful deer, that slowly nodded towards him.

"Strange thing!" he murmured, unable to remove his gaze from the object, which, though reflected in a small disk, was of life size. "I never dream of Hachisuba, but I see this vision."

He remained fascinated by the sight, and unconscious that a furious storm was descending the mountain, and that he was surrounded by black masses of cloud from which darted long-clawed lightning; while the Thunder-god, riding upon the seething mass, beat his drums until their rattle united into a prolonged, deafening roll. Saiki dropped the mirror, and staggered forward like a drunken man; steadying himself with his staff, and repeating "*Namu*" in order to check the power of the invisible demons.

As he neared a gigantic camphor-tree, a dense cloud enveloped it, then burst with a blinding flash and terrific explosion, and rent the trunk, leaving a dark object writhing in the fissure. The priest gazed upon it with blanched face and protruding eyes, while his robes fluttered behind him like banners.

When he recovered from his amazement, the storm had entirely

passed away, and the sun was shining upon a peaceful landscape. Upon approaching the tree, he beheld a curious black animal, growling like a tiger, as though in great pain; whereupon he thrust his staff into the crack, and pried the parts asunder, thus releasing the creature, which vanished like a ghost.

"What quick feet it has!" he thought. "If I had its power, I would dart back to Sokokura, and visit Hachisuba. I wish I possessed the supernatural gifts of the saints. They could go hither and thither like a flash of light, ride upon the clouds, and walk upon the water." Pausing suddenly, and beating his bosom with his hands: "Ah! I have lost the mirror! I left it under the rock where I rested this morning."

He swiftly retraced his steps; but the mountain-paths crossed each other in such a bewildering fashion that he presently lost his way, and wandered from ravine to ravine, until the sun set, and darkness quickly followed.

"This is most unfortunate," he said as he wearily seated himself. "My limbs are weak, and I feel as hollow as a dried gourd. I believe I have been bewitched by foxes. I must recover that mirror, even though I crawl like a snake over every inch of this mountain. If I do not find it, I shall feel as though the cord that unites me to her has been severed. The night is very dark."

At that instant, he perceived a light twinkling in the distance; whereupon he sighed, and rising proceeded towards it, presently arriving at a large palace surrounded by a stone wall.

"I thought I knew every important building in these mountains," he murmured, as he stopped before the main entrance, near which grew a mulberry-tree.

Then he saw a luminous sign bearing this inscription :—

TAIKO HON REI.

["Thunder drummer."]

Saikei pinched his arms, and struck his burr-like head, muttering as he did so,—

"Strange thing! I must be dreaming! This place is like one of the old Chinese palaces in the story-books." Raising his voice: "I am a travelling priest who has lost his way. I would thank you sincerely if you will permit me to enter, and rest for the night."

After waiting a while, he heard a female voice, that sounded like a lute, reply,—

"This is not a temple; but, if you are the priest who was overtaken by the storm this morning, I would like to see you. I have no food with which to entertain you, but think our poor shelter will be better than a cave on the mountain side. Will you be contented with what I offer?"

Saikei bowed towards the voice, then replied,—

"If you will let me rest under your roof, I can do without food."

"Very well," answered the voice.

"Come through the gate, and enter by the left archway."

The amazed priest obeyed; presently finding himself in a cavern-like apartment, in which stood a beautiful woman from whose body emanated a soft white light that illuminated the place, and revealed a form, wrapped in silken garments, lying upon a mat in the far corner. When the latter object moved, Saikei saw it was the Thunder-animal he had released from the tree.

Although he was a priest, he felt powerless to pray, and remained for some moments as though stricken dumb.

His hostess, noticing his confusion, said,—

"I know you are very tired, so will arrange a screen behind which you can sleep, and will give you a wooden pillow. As there are no mosquitoes here, your slumbers will not be disturbed."

Saikei thanked her gratefully, at the same time thinking,—

"I have heard of these thunder-animals. They neither eat nor drink, and never grow old. I must act cautiously, for she evidently understands the magic art."

When the pillow and screen were arranged, he knelt, sucked in his breath, bowed his head to the floor, and said,—

"I beg you will accept my sincere thanks for your kindness."

He retired, and, slipping off his black robe, reclined upon the mats, and laid his head upon the pillow; but could not sleep on account of the curious light.

About midnight he heard some one outside summoning the lady: so, rising, secretly followed her to the gate, when he beheld an extraordinary sight.

His hostess, who resembled a beautiful Chinese empress, was standing on the wet grass, conversing with a horrible-looking messenger from the Sea-god, who had a face like an ape, hairy arms, hands, and body, and was partly enveloped in a cloud.

"I await your communication," said the lady.

The messenger bowed, then said,—

"You must pour rain to-morrow morning between Musa, Yeti, and Obata. Do not neglect this, as it is your turn."

The demon bowed, and wrapping himself in the cloud, vanished into the sky.

Saikei, who had listened like one in a dream, was too much scared to

retire. When his hostess turned to re-enter the palace, she saw him, and said in a gentle tone,—

"Those who listen must join in the crime. Follow me."

He obeyed, and, when they reached the main apartment, knelt, and bowing respectfully, awaited her communication.

"Honourable priest, what is your religious name?" she demanded.

"Saiki," he tremblingly replied. "I am also called Thunder Priest."

"It is a good name for my purpose," she said, smiling sweetly. "My husband is the Thunder-god, who was saved by you from being tortured in the tree. He has broken his arm, and cannot go out to pour rain as directed. I do not know whether the Emperor of Heaven instructed him to descend to the lower world, and frighten people; or whether he lost his balance, and tumbled. As he cannot move from his mat, I shall feel under great obligation if you will take his place. Your name being Thunder Priest is a fortunate omen."

Saiki gasped, big drops of sweat stood out upon his forehead, and humbly bowing, he replied,—

"Honourable exalted being, I am not a hermit of Kumé, and have not the power to ride the clouds and pour out rain. This is a most unexpected thing to me."

His hostess smiled, and bowing slightly said,—

"What do you most desire in this world?"

Saiki stroked his chin, and was about to reply, "To meet Hachisuba;" but, checking his inclination, bowed, sucked in his breath, and said,—

"Honourable exalted being, I should judge that you understand the art of magic. If you will teach it to me, I will do any thing you may request."

"I know about your past life," she answered. "In your various existences, you have committed many bad and some good deeds, which almost equal each other. If you sincerely repent your wickedness in this world, and promise to abstain from *saké*, never again to regard a woman with affection, and to spend the rest of your life in holy meditation, upon Iwatoyama [Rock-door Mountain], sitting under the waterfall, fasting and praying, I will instruct you in the mysteries known to the ancient saints. But if, after your initiation, you fail to keep your pledge, and attempt to use the supernatural power for evil, it will destroy you. In return for my instruction, you must take my husband's place at daybreak."

Saiki remained silent for some moments, with his mind torn by doubts. While most anxious to become proficient in the magic arts, he still looked forward to meeting Hachisuba; little imagining that her body was resting under the shadow of the tall grass. He also felt afraid of Takeakira's vengeance, thinking,—

"That younger brother will, as long as he lives, never cease to track me. This is an uncomfortable thing to remember. If I possess magic power, I can defeat his desire, which, after all, will not be committing a sin. Once I discover Hachisuba, I will waft her away to a distant province, renounce my profession, and marry her. That will not be using my knowledge for an evil purpose. It is said, when the saints had dealings with the magicians, they always made certain mental reservations, that enabled them to slip out of their agreements. Although I am afraid of this luminous Thunder-goddess, I will avail myself of her offer. When I have done what she asks, our

contract is at an end. I can handle fire, if I do so discreetly."

"The day will soon dawn," said his hostess, who had watched him intently. "What is your decision?"

Saikei, after bowing in the most respectful manner, replied,—

"I agree."

She bade him approach her closely, and whispered,—

"Your name, Thunder Priest, and your saving my honourable husband from torture, both encourage me to teach you how to ride on the clouds, or walk on water, produce rain or a storm at your will, cut off the supply from springs, and dry up wells,—all of which must be used for the benefit of mankind. I will also teach you how to render yourself invisible, and make you proof against any weapon."

Then she whispered the incantations in his ear. Saikei nodded intelligently, and repeated each, over and over again, until he knew them perfectly; when she said in a menacing tone,—

"You are now master of the magic art; but, if ever you use it wrongfully, it will recoil upon you! In future avoid evil, and practise virtue. Your knowledge will in no way interfere with your priestly duties; in fact, will aid you to attain perfection."

She showed him a jar of water, and a branch of fine-leaved bamboo; saying,—

"When you ascend the cloud, secretly desire it to move towards Musa, Yeti, and Obata; and you will be conveyed thither. Upon arriving over the dry fields, soak this branch in the water, and shake it several times, just enough to produce a good steady shower such as will cause rice to grow. Do not shake too quickly or too slowly. When the jar is empty, return

hither. Be careful to sit in the centre of the cloud, and not to become excited; or you will lose your balance, and receive great injury."

The priest bowed, and promised to faithfully obey her instructions.

When the short night of summer was over, and the ruddy light began to gleam in the west,¹ a cloud came to the gate; and his hostess said,—

"Thunder Priest, mount quickly."

He took the branch from her hand; then the jar mysteriously rose, and moved to the cloud, where it rested as though on dry land; seeing which, Saikei stepped upon the billowy mass, and did as he had been instructed.

In another moment he found himself rising into the sky, and floating in the direction he desired.

¹The first indications of sunrise are often seen in that direction.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

All curious phenomena should be studied, and not derided because they are difficult to understand. This is the reason why I have carefully examined various books and evidence concerning Thunder-animals, which certainly exist even at the present time.

The most common is termed *Rai-ju*, and is mentioned in a book called *Shinano Cho mei-ko* [Geography of the Shinano Province], as the Thunder-animal of Tade-sina Mountain. I give a picture of it, taken from a work entitled *Shin-rai-ki* [Thunder Record]; from which the following is a quotation:—

"On the twenty-second day of the sixth month of the second year of Meiwa [July, 1766], a Thunder-animal fell at Oyama [Great Mountain], in the province of Sagami. It was captured by a farmer, who brought it to Yedo, and exhibited it for money on the Riyo-goku Bridge. The creature was a little larger than a cat, and resembled a weasel; it had black hair, and five claws on each paw. During fine weather it was very tame and gentle; but, before and during a storm, exceedingly savage and unmanageable."

Another kind is referred to in *Gun-sho san-yo* [Important Collection of Many Useful Books]. I give a picture of this, from a work published by a certain man in Osaka; in which is the following passage:—

"On the tenth day of the fifth month of the first year of Kiowa [June, 1801], this *Rai-jin* fell, and died instantly, in the town of Shio-kama, in the province of Aki. It measured one foot four inches from nose to tail."

The ancient Chinese work *Sosinki* [Record of Seeking God], published by Kanho, states that a man named Yodoka, living in Fu-foo in the province of Shin, was one summer-day in his garden, when the thunder struck a mulberry tree; noticing which, Yodoka approached it, and found a curious animal, with its thigh broken, clinging to the trunk. He despatched the creature, which had the head of a monkey, with crimson lips, eyes like mirrors, and two sharp claws on each paw. Indeed, it was unlike any animal ever before seen, though it must have resembled the one that in later times fell in Aki.

Many ancient Chinese works refer to an animal called *Rai-ko* [Honourable Thunder], said to have often fallen from the sky. In the book entitled *Wa-miyo sho shin rei sho*, *Rai-ko* is termed *Rai-shi* [Thunder-teacher]. The true Japanese name is *Ika-zuchi* [thunder], or *Narukami* [Thunder-god]. Now people sometimes term it *Ka-sha* [Fire-demon].

The famous philosopher Ohjiu says:—
"Artists always depict *Rai-ko* [Honourable Thunder] as a demon, beating an arc of drums suspended in the clouds above his head. This figure is also termed *Rai-den* or *Rai-jin*."

In *Koku-shi-ko* [geography], published by Rijio, it says that Thunder-animals are common in *Rai-shin* [Province of Thunder], and that the inhabitants eat them.

The ancients gave various accounts of these creatures, some describing them as looking like men, others like weasels, monkeys, or birds; but no two artists represent them in the same manner.

The book entitled *Go-zo-so*, written by Sha-zai-ko, describes a Thunder-bird called *Rai-cho*, resembling a cock. It has spurs of flesh, which, when struck together, produce a terrible sound.

These birds are abundant near the

temple of the Gongen of Iyeyasu, on Shiro-yama [White Mountain], in the district of Ishikawa, in the province of Kaga, where they feed upon the tree-frog termed *rui* [thunder]. They are also found in the mountain-range *Nori-kura*, in the province of Hida, and are always seen sporting in the sky during a thunder-storm.

The book *Shin-rai-ki* [Record of Thunder] describes the origin of that phenomenon, as follows:—

"The earth is full of saltpetre and sulphur, which rise in the form of mist, and, uniting in the sky, become a vapour that possesses the properties of gunpowder. When this nears the intense heat of the sun, it explodes, like a natural gas; and the terrible sound is heard by all the world. The shock, striking animals and birds wandering in the clouds, hurls them to the ground. Therefore thunder, and lightning, and the creatures that tumble from the clouds during a storm, are not one and the same thing."

The old books tell of cocks that eat fire, and rats that live in the flames; but there is no proof that such things exist now.

The *Shin-rai-ki* states that the so-called *Rai-cho* of Shiro-yama is nothing but the common *Sho-kei* [pine-cock], which is the bird referred to by the Emperor Goto-bain in the poem,—

"In the shadow of the pine-tree of Shiro-yama, Thunder-birds rest, and spend the night;"

and of whom the *Kuge*, Fujiwara Iye-taka, wrote,—

"Even the thunder-birds seek the shelter of Shiro-yama, And, roosting in the pine-trees, slumber peacefully."

Some artists represent the *Rai-cho* as a pheasant, others like a dove; so I inquired of many persons from the provinces of Kaga and Echizen, who all agreed that the bird resembles the pine-cock, which is the picture I give in this book.

In endeavouring to unravel this mystery, I have heard so many conflicting stories that I feel both confused and irritated: still I am convinced of the existence of these animals.

This is the opinion of many old people.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER XIV

"HEAR THE SOUND OF THE THUNDER-GOD HIGH UP IN THE SKY"

ON the morning that Saikei learned the magic art from the wife of the Thunder-animal, a storm-cloud swept down from the mountains, and, after lashing Lake Biwa into a state of high rebellion, sucked up a volume of its fresh-laden water, and moved swiftly in the direction of Obata.

The first intimation received by the inhabitants was the arrival of a furious wind, that swept the rice-fields, and caused the farmers to seize their hoes, and run for the nearest shelter. The sudden blast, respecting no one, tumbled an official out of his litter, spurred the jaded horse of his attendant into a furious gallop, caught the hat from the head of his footman, and bowled it along the ground, reversed the parasol of a pretty singing-girl on her way to the temple, and, turning her sleeves inside out, sent her love-letters whirling into the air like a flock of scared pigeons.

The keepers of tea-booths and roadside refreshment-places shrieked orders to their servants to secure the high screens of split bamboo, used to keep the sun from the patrons of their establishments. Staid matrons frantically beat their bosoms as they saw their offspring knocked down, or carried before the wind like vessels in full sail; and many nervous persons, who had found a place of safety, rushed back into the open, and were rudely embraced by the tornado. Old people clung to the corners of houses, and to fences and trees, or crouched behind any object that gave them partial shelter; children away from their homes crawled under verandas, and tightly closed their eyes; and strangers and

pilgrims sought refuge in the nearest house, without making the usual respectful salutation to their entertainers.

Everybody disrespectfully turned their backs to Futen [the Wind-god], and muttered,—

"Hateful thing!"

The blast was followed by a whirl of dust that obscured both sky and land, and prevented the people from beholding the miraculous sight of a priest with a head like a chestnut-burr, riding towards them on a storm-cloud.

Saikei, who was exhilarated with the novelty of his position, steadied himself by resting his left hand upon the rim of the jar, and watched the carp and lampreys struggling to gain the surface of the cloud.

As he neared the parched shore, he set his lips firmly, dipped the branch in the jar, and when it was thoroughly soaked raised it aloft, and, forgetting his instructions, shook it vigorously.

In an instant, lightning flashed from under and around him; the thunder-drums suspended above his head were beaten by unseen hands, and the inhabitants of the province of Omi treated to a storm that surpassed any they had ever experienced.

Those who lived in substantial abodes closed the outer shutters tightly, and, suspending mosquito-nets as at night, crept under them, and burnt pine-needles in order to kill the swarms of insects that had sought refuge in their dwellings; while poor people and farmers, whose houses were like bird-cages, selected the driest spots, and read holy books,

or prayed fervently that the thunder might not strike them, their shelter, or their barns.

These people did not trouble the mosquitoes, nor did the latter annoy them; they being used to one another's presence.

"I have sprinkled too hard," thought Saikei, as he flew over Obata. "*Hai!* my old friend the salt-merchant lives hereabouts. I will pay my respects to him, and leave him a few fish."

Then, without desiring to do evil, he willed that the cloud visit the house of Tomosada.

In another instant, the fore-running wind struck the thatch of the salt-dealer's stable, and, stripping it off in a sheet, exposed the oxen to the fury of the storm; seeing which, the merchant shouted to his drivers and servants,—

"All of you hurry and cover that building! The animals are sick, and the rain will kill them."

"I have made the storm too strong," muttered Saikei, leaning forward to ascertain what damage he had done; when, losing his balance, he shot off the slippery surface of the cloud.

As he quitted it, the lightning played about him like a wheel of fire; and the thunder, striking everything within its reach, killed the yellow ox, and many others purchased by Tomosada since the priest last saw the animal, and stunned all but one of the servants, who tumbled off the roof in different directions. Having accomplished this mischief at the barn, it darted into the house, and paralyzed the mistress and her maids.

The uninjured man, who retained his wits, was the ox-driver whom Saikei had met at the Yasu ferry; and who, though half blinded by the flash, continued to grasp the object that had fallen upon the

ridge-pole, and to prevent its remounting the broken cloud, out of which leaped myriads of carp and lampreys.

"I have you!" he cried, seizing the priest by the robe, and dragging him back. "*Namu Amida Butsu!* I am not afraid of you."

He threw his arms about his prisoner, and both rolled off the roof; Saikei, who was underneath, striking the ground with a sound like cracking a rock, and lying motionless amid the flapping fishes.

The driver, who in his excitement little imagined what he had captured, bound Saikei hand and foot, then threw him into the ruined barn, and went to the assistance of his fellow-servants, some of whom appeared to be dead, while others were yelling like frightened children. He found all of them more or less scorched, so, without stopping for instructions, ran off to fetch a famous old physician who lived near by. He discovered him busily engaged in picking up the fish, and throwing them into a water-tank.

"*Hai!* I will go at once," answered the doctor, wiping his forehead with his sleeve. "It isn't every day that the sky rains carp and lampreys. Have you any at your honourable master's place? They are very efficacious in restoring persons who have been struck by thunder."

The ox-driver made a wry mouth, scratched his ear, and said,—

"Hundreds of thousands! Do not trouble to bring any with you! Come along, or somebody will die before you get there. Please let me carry your medicine-case. This is an urgent matter."

He ran back, shouting,—

"Doctor coming! Doctor coming!"

He found Tomosada kneeling by the side of his wife, who was lying

amid a pile of women in the guest-room.

"Kiku is dead," said his master. "She was a good housekeeper, and knew all about the salt-business. This is a very vexatious thing!"

"The doctor is here!" panted the driver.

Tomosada regarded him in a dazed manner, and replied,—

"Go and pick up the dead. The oxen ought to be skinned: their hides will fetch something. Bad business! Bad business!"

As he spoke, the physician entered, and after bowing, drawing in his breath, and making the usual speeches, gazed at the stricken women, and placidly observed,—

"Bring me some of the carp I see lying in the yard. Only the lively ones will do."

The driver hurried from the room, and soon returned with a salt-basket filled with the fish; seeing which, the doctor smiled, put on his spectacles, and, approaching Tomosada's wife, gently opened her garments, and placed a large carp on her bosom, where it flapped vigorously. He held her hand, and watched the effect of his remedy, saying softly to himself,—

"This will accomplish it!"

Master and man regarded him with parted lips and staring eyes, and whispered to one another,—

"*Naru-hodo!*"

"Very curious thing!"

"Will it kill the carp?"

The doctor, who was exceedingly precise and deliberate in speech and action, beamed upon them, and replied,—

"In the *Kan-ben-ho* [minute directions for curing the sick], by the famous doctor Yoki, it says: 'Mix equal portions of *zin*, *ki*, *bakumon*, and *gomisi*, together, and let the person who is struck by thunder take a teacupful at certain intervals.'"

He opened his medicine-chest, and, having carefully measured the various substances, motioned to a female servant who had recovered her senses, and, smiling, said:

"Steep this in a *sho* [about three pints] of water; and give your honourable mistress ten cups, at regular intervals, during the hour of the Hare, five during the hour of the Dragon, twelve during the hour of the Snake, and seven during the hour of the Horse. Remember these directions; and do not permit your honourable mistress to take more than one cup at a time, or exceed the number of cups during the hours specified. I will return before the time expires."

He half closed his eyes, and, after feeling the various pulses of his patient, said to Tomosada,—

"The warm principle is gaining the ascendancy, but there is a disturbance in the upper division of the body. I fear, when the honourable wife recovers, she will be stone deaf. The thunder has entered her ears, and split the curtains."

In a few moments Kiku sat up, and, gazing at the salt-merchant, shouted,—

"I hope I have not annoyed my honourable husband. I cannot tell what made me lie down at this hour of the day."

Tomosada, who felt sorry for her, gruffly answered, in a loud voice,—

"Do not trouble about that. Can you hear what I say?"

His wife gazed at him with a puzzled air, and gently replied,—

"Why do you move your lips, and not speak?"

Tomosada advanced quite close to her, and shouted in her ear,—

"I am speaking at the top of my voice. Are you deaf?"

Kiku drew back a little, bowed, and said in a high key,—

"You blow in my ear, but do not

speak! I fear the thunder has gone through my head."

"That is so," said the old physician, smiling, and nodding assent.

Then he wrote on a paper,—

"You are right. It is lucky it did not carry away all your senses. It struck you very lightly. In addition to what I have given your servant to administer, take some *bushi-ichi-mi* twice a day, upon rising and retiring. It will quiet your nerves."

Kiku read every character, as he rapidly made them with his brush; and, when he finished, replied in a voice that awoke two of her women from their faint,—

"Honourable doctor, I understand. I shall never, in this state, hear another thunderstorm, but shall live in utter silence. I am thankful the thunder did not carry off my sight."

"*Hai!*" bawled her husband, who could not believe the truth. "You can still attend to your duty, though I wish you would not shout so. The thunder has evidently left you the use of your tongue."

"*Hai!*" smilingly observed the doctor. "That is the hardest thing to silence. I have a wife who wags hers from sunrise to sunset, and after. Suppose we look at the servants lying there."

The carp-cure was used very successfully; though, in some cases, the doctor in addition burned *senko* [incense-sticks] under the patients' nostrils. Before the storm had passed out of sight, both men and maids had recovered their senses, and were busily employed in putting the premises in order.

"I will now leave you," said the gentle physician. "Do not worry about your wife's deafness; she will soon understand what you mean, by the motion of your lips. Let the carp used by me be buried. Did

you not notice, all of them died as soon as they had cured my patients? They absorbed the poison left in the system by the thunder."

"Honourable doctor," said Tomosada, bowing his head, and respectfully saluting, "your instructions shall be obeyed." Handing him some money: "Kindly receive this for your prompt attention."

"I wish all my customers were as prompt in their payments," quietly replied the learned man.

"The storm which has ruined some people has enriched me. Please accept a hundred thousand thanks."

When the doctor had departed, Tomosada sent for the ox-driver, and said,—

"Were all the animals killed?"

"Honourable master, they are as dead as stones."

The merchant, after thinking for a while, said,—

"Do you believe the carp would have any effect upon them?"

"I am afraid not," answered the man, averting his face in order to conceal his inclination to merriment.

"When the thunder fairly strikes man or ox, all the carp in Lake Biwa will not bring them back to life." He paused, bowed, and sucked in his breath; then continued, "Honourable master, I have caught the animal, so you can have your revenge upon it for killing your cattle."

Tomosada regarded him sternly, out of the corners of his eyes, and said, "Has the thunder struck the *saké*-tub, and splashed its contents down your throat?"

The man chuckled good-humouredly, and, repeating his obeisance, answered,—

"This stupid fellow has not tasted *saké* for a week, though he hopes soon to do so through your benevolent liberality. Honourable master, I again assure you, I have

captured the Thunder-animal. It has a head like a bear, and is as black as night."

"*Ye!*" cried the merchant. "Doubtless you are as brave as ten men! Why, I have never heard that the great heroes Asahina Saburo, or Idzumi Kojiro, ever performed such a feat. The thunder must have affected your liver. You ought not to joke upon such an occasion."

The driver felt angry at this, as he had expected nothing but praise: so, sitting up on his heels, he said without bowing,—

"While I do not pretend to be as brave as those ancient great men, I do most truly assert that I have captured what I say! As you evidently doubt me, please come out to the stable, and satisfy your eyes."

Tomosada, with his mouth awry, as though sneering at the man's statement, followed him to the building, where he beheld Saikei, whose legs and arms were tied to his neck like a beast, and who, half dead, and covered with straw and mire, resembled a wild animal.

"*Hai!*" ejaculated the driver, crouching near his prize, and pointing at it with his forefinger. "There it is! But, now I look at it closer, I believe it is a robber." Suddenly: "*Oya, oya!* Why! it is the priest whom I met at the Yasu ferry, and who defrauded you of that yellow ox!"

Tomosada summoned his wife and all the servants; and, when Kiku beheld Saikei, she loudly exclaimed,—

"That is the man who cheated us! I know him! I know him!"

"Do not bawl so!" yelled her husband, angrily motioning her to speak more quietly; but she, neither hearing nor understanding him, pointed at the prisoner, and repeated her remark in the same tone.

The driver, "waiting for the opportunity of his life," bowed and said,—

"Honourable master, I caught that rascal endeavouring to scramble back upon the cloud."

Tomosada regarded the insensible form for some moments, and, checking his wife by raising the forefinger of his left hand, said,—

"Although it is not an uncommon thing to see fish and frogs drop from the clouds, this is the first time, since the heaven and earth were opened, that a priest has fallen from the sky. You have all heard of the old woman named Kami-nari [Thunder-woman], who received her name on account of her rapid and loud talking,—like my wife,—but even she cannot ride a cloud, and pour rain. This may be a priest caught up by a dragon, and dropped with the fishes. Ah! Strange thing anyway!"

Then everybody shouted their opinions at once; and Kiku, loudest of all, cried,—

"*Hai!* that is the fellow who wept, and drew the ox out of us! Honourable husband, do you not think so?"

Upon hearing this, the servants exclaimed,—

"Indeed he is the same one! Last time, he stole the yellow-haired ox: this time, he has killed all your oxen! Ah! hateful fellow!"

Tomosada sought the head man of Obata; who listened attentively, then said in a slow, dignified tone,—

"It is too late in the day to report this matter to Lord Sasaki. Put a guard over the priest, and keep him tied hand and foot. At last we have secured the rascal who stole your ox. I think we were a little too sudden with that woman—though doubtless her moment had arrived. Anyhow neither of us struck her.

Mind, and keep a good lookout for the priest: he evidently understands the magic art."

The salt-dealer returned home, and, after seeing that Saikei was bound even more securely than before, retired for the night.

At dawn he was awakened by the shouts of the children; it being the fifth day of the fifth month [the Boys' Feast], and consequently a general holiday.

After yawning, and awakening his wife, he went into the veranda, and glanced in the direction of Obata; then shouted to her,—

"Come out, and see the *nobori* [paper carp, suspended from the ends of tall bamboo rods]. The air is alive with them. They move their bodies, and flap their tails, like living fishes. Ah! no son has been born to us, so we shall never hoist a *nobori* over our dwelling."

Kiku listened with open mouth, as though endeavouring to catch his words.

"*Hai!*" she bawled. "It is some distance to the castle, and I will have your meal ready in a few moments. The rice-cakes I made yesterday are not all eaten."

"I was talking about *nobori*, not rice-cakes," he yelled, pointing in the direction of the village, and moving his hand in imitation of the wind-distended toys. "I am sorry we have no son in whose honour we can fly one of those. Do you not understand?"

Kiku glanced at the objects, smilingly nodded at him, and shouted,—

"Carp? Oh, yes! I will have one cooked for you with a dish of stewed lampreys. Thunder-animal-priest brought us plenty of fish in his cloud."

This reply exasperated Tomosada; who, producing a brush and some paper and ink, wrote as follows:—

"Do not try to talk; or, if you must ease your feelings, whisper what you have to say. Your voice resembles that of Kami-nari."

She carefully read every character, then, pressing the paper to her forehead, bowed, sucked in her breath, and said in a very low tone,—

"Honourable husband, this affliction is new to me, and I do not know how to use my tongue. In future I will write my replies and requests. Kindly forgive your stupid wife."

"All right," he said, nodding as he spoke. "If you had continued to yell as you have done since yesterday morning, I should soon have been as deaf as you are."

At the hour of the Dragon [8 to 10 A.M.], he summoned the driver, and bade him place the priest in a bamboo basket used for carrying vegetables to market, and to select six stout men among the servants to act as bearers.

Saikei, who still remained insensible, was thrust into the receptacle; then a strong pole was passed through the upper part of the basket, and it was raised and carried in procession to the castle of Kwan-non-ji, old and young crowding about to see and jeer at the priest who had become a Thunder-animal.

Every boy in the province was enjoying himself; and the roofs of the houses were adorned with sweet-flags [iris] to counteract the power of snakes, mugwort to make the lads loyal, and three varieties of trees and grasses to ward off the hundred evils; while overhead the *nobori* fluttered and flapped, and in the streets, boys representing rival camps blew horns, beat drums, shook spears, and manœuvred with swords, in mimic warfare, the strongest party finally raising the five-coloured flag of victory. This performance is termed *Sokio*, and

the day is joyfully anticipated by all the boys in Great Japan; while retainers avail themselves of the occasion, and hasten to pay their respects to their feudal chiefs.

As Tomosada and his party neared the castle, they found themselves mingling with the dense crowd coming from all quarters; whereupon the salt-dealer shouted,—

“Keep your eyes on the prisoner!”

Then followed a squeeze through the gate; and they found themselves before the *yashiki*, which was beautifully decorated with armour, flags, and spears, in honour of the Shogun who originated the ceremony.

The salt-dealer, keeping one hand upon the basket containing Saikei, directed his men to the residence of Sir Yamada; who he hoped would be at home, and listen to his petition.

He sent the ox-driver ahead to announce that Tomosada of Obata desired an audience with the councillor, and that he was accompanied by the head man of the village, and seven servants carrying a firmly bound priest.

Sir Yamada had just returned from paying his respects to Lord Sasaki. Taye, who represented the councillor's daughter, was at the great guardian temple of the castle, praying for his welfare; and Tajikichi was kneeling before his patron, respectfully congratulating him,—when the messenger prostrated himself at the entrance to the apartment, and announced the arrival of the party.

Sir Yamada thought a while, then said,—

“Tell the man I will receive his petition from the veranda of the east room.—Come, Tajikichi, you are interested in priests; you shall be near me while I try this fellow.”

In a few moments the servant returned, and, bowing respectfully, said,—

“Honourable councillor, the salt-dealer and his companions await your pleasure in the back yard.”

Sir Yamada rose, and, followed by Tajikichi, quitted the room. They proceeded to a rear apartment, and, kneeling on the cushions placed upon the floor, surveyed the party; all of whom but Saikei had their foreheads bowed to the ground. The priest still remained insensible, curled up in the bamboo basket.

An attendant, who had received the cards of the salt merchant and the head man, read them aloud to Sir Yamada, who, bowing slightly in response to the visitors' very respectful salutations, said,—

“State your complaint.”

Tomosada and the head man then began to relate the story of the storm, and how the ox-driver secured the prisoner; but they forgot to mention the latter's name.

“Release him, and see whether he is alive,” said the judge.

The attendants opened the basket, tumbled the priest to the ground, and cut the cords that bound his lower limbs; though even that did not revive him.

“Honourable councillor,” respectfully remarked the salt-dealer, “this is the *bozu* who once defrauded me of a yellow-ox.”

Upon hearing this, Tajikichi sprang to his feet, and cried,—

“*Hai!* Now I know him! That is the priest Saikei, the enemy of my honourable father. My enemy!”

He was about to rush for his sword, when Sir Yamada stopped him, saying,—

“Make sure before you strike!” Turning to Tomosada: “You can retire. If this is the priest who stole your ox, I will see justice is done to you. I can understand

every thing but the story of his having fallen from a thunder-cloud."

The salt-dealer and his party quitted the yard, feeling sure the prisoner would be severely punished.

After they were out of hearing, Sir Yamada summoned some foot-soldiers armed with swords and copper maces, and, when he and Tajikichi had procured weapons, bade one of the men beat the priest on the back with his mace.

This vigorous treatment proved efficacious; for presently Saikei opened his eyes, and gazing around him, as though greatly surprised, stammered,—

"Why—bind—me—up?"

"Are you not the priest Saikei, known as Thunder Priest?" sternly demanded Yamada.

"What?" sullenly ejaculated the prisoner. "Why am I bound like a badger?"

"Listen," said Sir Yamada, who used his sword to support him. "You once stole a yellow ox from Tomosada Monoyemon, of Obata, upon a pretence that your father's spirit inhabited the animal. Your wickedness resulted in the death of Motoye, the wife of Sir Ihara Jiro-jiro Takeakira, and involved the latter in great misery; finally causing him to kill Hachisuba, the wife of his late honourable elder brother, and bringing upon him the honourable sentence of *hara-kiri*. You separated him from his two children," pointing to the boy, who had risen, and was glaring at the prisoner. "One of them, his only son Tajikichi, stands there. Since his father's death, he has never rested day or night, for thinking of you. Now his dutiful soul, reaching to heaven, has touched the benevolent gods, and brought you eye to eye without his seeking. Confess at once!"

Tajikichi, sending for his bow

and arrows, glanced contemptuously down upon the priest, and said:

"You are my enemy, and I cannot live under the same heaven with you. I only abstain from drawing my bow, because my honourable patron orders you to confess. Confess, you unrelenting, wicked priest, Amada Saikei,—the Thunder-animal,—and submit to the punishment of Heaven!"

"Ye! Yellow-bill! [young bird]" jeered the prisoner. "I am Amada Saikei,—Thunder Priest! So your honourable father killed his sister-in-law instead of me? Indeed that was a wicked act!" Sadly: "Hachisuba dead! I am sorry! Well, small boy, so you desire to be revenged upon your father's enemy? You cannot hurt me! I can free myself when I will."

He repeated a magic spell, and the ropes fell from him like burnt threads.

"Seize him!" shouted Sir Yamada to the soldiers, who advanced mace in hand.

As the blows rained upon him, the men who delivered them recoiled and tumbled as though they had struck a rock, and their muscles became as weak as water.

A cloud descended; and Saikei, stepping upon it, rose from the ground to a level with the veranda, and, jeering at Tajikichi, said:

"Now, yellow-bill, shoot, and avenge the scarecrow who bought my yellow ox!"

The boy set his teeth, and, drawing the bow of mulberry and arrow of mugwort, uttered a prayer, and let the shaft fly.

The bolt flew straight until it neared the priest, then vanished, and instantly re-appeared behind him, as though it had passed through his body; after which, it buried itself in the thatch of a building used for storing charcoal.

Sir Yamada levelled his halberd, and hurled it at the laughing priest; who shouted,—

“Bad shot! Try again!”

The cloud enveloped him; the lightning flashed, the thunder rattled, and Saikei vanished like mist before the sun.

As the soldiers rose from the ground, and fumbled at their numbed bodies, Tajikichi shook his bow towards the sky, and cried,—

“I will kill you yet, even if I have to ride on a cloud to do it. I hate you!”

When Taye returned from the temple, and learned that, although her brother had met their enemy, he had failed to avenge their parent, she became very much excited, and moaned with grief, saying,—

“Ah! Though he has escaped this time, he cannot slip through the net of heaven.”

Sir Yamada sent for Tomosada, and said to him,—

“Upon a previous occasion you invoked justice to aid you in recovering an ox you had given away, and thus involved a worthy man in great trouble; but as you have bound Thunder Priest, and brought him to me, the matter is equal. Now retire quickly.”

The salt-dealer, who feared he was about to be fined or tortured, bowed very humbly, and returned to Obata with the head man and servants. From that day his luck turned, and he sank into such poverty that not even his former drivers knew what had become of him.

There is an old proverb, “Try a person seven times, before you suspect him.” Tomosada had been guilty of seven stupid acts, but the reason of his great punishment will be revealed later on.

Although Tajikichi failed in his

first attempt to avenge his honourable father's wrongs, he did not give up in despair, but practised the art of war, and exercised with Taye; who, though she thought of the matter day and night, was very reticent with her younger brother.

There is an old proverb, “The mountain-stream makes a great noise amid the shallow rocks, but it glides without sound over the deep holes.”

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

In this chapter, I often refer to the power of the Thunder-god. Never look in the direction in which he has struck, or you may become permanently blind. Thunder visits some places in the summer, and others in the winter.

When a person is hit, apply green corn-husks to his eyes: it is a good remedy.

In a book called *Sha-hon-shin rai-ki* [Copy of Records of Thunder], I find the following:—

“If any one struck by thunder is found lying face downwards, he is sure to be alive; but if found face upwards, he is always dead. When it thunders, stretch yourself out with your face downwards.”

Re-shun Ro-jin says,—

“When any one is struck by thunder, make him lie upon his back, and place a live carp in his bosom. If the carp jumps and moves, the patient will recover, and the carp die. This is infallible.

“When thunder scorches the flesh, burn *ko* [incense] under the sufferer's nose. This will cause him to cough, and break the spell of the Thunder-god.”

I have made many inquiries, and discovered beyond doubt, that, in those persons who are most afraid of thunder, the *Inki* [female principle] predominates; while, in those who are indifferent to it, the *Yoki* [male principle] is in the ascendancy. This was told me by a number of aged people, well versed in natural philosophy.

I take much pleasure in searching for and relating these facts, as they add great interest to my story.

CHAPTER XV

SAIKEI SUSPENDS A ROPE OF STRAW ACROSS THE WATERFALL
OF MOUNT IWATO

THE priestly magician, enveloped in the cloud he had summoned to his aid, was carried toward the mountain of Iwato, on the east of Kwan-non-ji.

"Convey me slowly, and contract yourself," he willed.

The billowy mass fell from about Saikai, and, closing in compact form, permitted him to see the sky and the pine-clad crags, bare rocky spurs, and deep valleys of Iwato-yama.

As he gazed upon the latter, he saw the cascades glittering like silver, heard their roar as they poured into the gullies on their eager rush to meet the great ocean, and, sighing, thought,—

"The gods ordain many things that we cannot understand!" Grasping his arms, and burying his nails in his flesh: "Hachisuba, were you born to destroy me? Why should you, of all the hundred million women of the world, have possessed the power of bewitching me? From the first moment I beheld you, when I was assisting in a solemn rite, and you were kneeling and praying fervently, until the last, when you, like fruit ripening within my grasp, were cut off by the sword of your brother-in-law, I have been under the spell of your gentle, sweetly perfumed, beautiful presence, and the music of your tongue. Now you are lost to me, like a jewel dropped in deep water! I have sinned, and, as a punishment, enjoyed only the shadow of happiness! I will seek the spot upon this mountain, where the holy priest built his hut; and,

renouncing the world, endeavour by fasting, prayer, and penance, to atone for the past. Now I understand why Riuju taught the doctrines that regulate the conduct of the priests of Shin-gon. One cannot stir water with a foul stick. The teacher must be pure, or his doctrine will appear tainted. I repent! I repent!"

At that moment he noticed a thin cloud of smoke rising from the valley over which he was passing; and on approaching it he glanced down, and saw Koku-un and Haku-un warming *saké* on a fire composed of small twigs of bamboo. They were squatting opposite one another, and alternately blowing the damp fuel; their ragged, miserable robes, unshaven heads, and hollow cheeks showing they had fared ill since they quitted the Nameless Temple.

Saikai willed the cloud to deposit him near them, which was done so noiselessly that they were utterly unaware of his presence.

"Haku-un," slyly remarked the giant, "I wonder what has become of our old comrade Thunder Priest. He was a sharp fellow, was he not? Why, I, who could squeeze any other man of his size like a rice-cake, was powerless in his presence."

"*Hai!*" chuckled the little one, anxiously watching the copper vessel in which they had set the bottle of *saké*. "He was a very hard rock to split. But," grinning until he exhibited his gums, "he had to run away from that hungry-looking brother-in-law of Hachisuba San! *Hai, hai, hai!* It does me good to think that a fellow who

could paralyze me with a glance was afraid of somebody."

Koku-un rubbed his brush-like head, and, making a comical gesture with his mouth, replied,—

"Sir Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira will never again trouble our clever chief; he has gone the lonely road, through the honourable assistance of his dagger." Sighing: "I often feel envious that I was not born a *samurai*. It would be such a comfort to die the honourable death, instead of being crucified, or decapitated like a dog—as you and I will be!"

"*Hai!*" nodded Haku-un, testing the heat of the water with the little finger of his left hand. "*Moshi!* this is getting hot!" Then he sucked his finger, and continued, "I, like our old chief, have burnt myself for nothing! Are you aware, that, though Takeakira is dead, he has a son and daughter who can stand up with any weapon against any one? I was told this by a blind shampooer, who said that the boy can use the bow of mulberry and arrow of mugwort, and that the girl fences and wields a dirk like a true *samurai*. Let Master-thief Thunder Priest beware when he meets them! They will sever the thread of his existence."

"I am not afraid!" said Saikei.

Upon hearing this, the thieves sprang to their feet; their eyes protruded, and their hair bristled like that of a scared cat. They simultaneously fell upon their knees, bowed their foreheads to the rock, sucked in their breath, and murmured,—

"Honourable master! We did not—indeed we did not know you were here!"

Saikei regarded them contemptuously, and said,—

"So I am to be conquered by a boy and girl?"

"Honourable master, nobody said

so,—nobody said so!" nervously replied the giant.

"Honourable master—shampooer, shampooer!" murmured the trembling Haku-un. "It is all foolishness, —foolishness!"

"At what time did you come here? and how have you contrived to exist upon this mountain?" demanded the priest.

Both of them spoke at once; on hearing which, Saikei said,—

"You talk like young women who have no sense.—Koku-un, you begin the story."

"Honourable master," said the giant, "we knew that you had determined to give up the position of Living Master of the Nameless Temple."

"*Hai*, honourable master," cried the other. "And, as the people were becoming too anxious about our welfare, we thought it best to 'eat the wind.'"

"Honourable master," softly continued Koku-un, "we wandered hither and thither in the province, waiting for a message from you."

"*Ye!*" sneered Saikei: "I know how you waited,—with your staves ready to level travellers, so that you could more easily search their garments."

"*Hai, hai, hai!*" cried Haku-un rapidly bowing, and drawing in his breath, like a prisoner in great apprehension of punishment. "We, having no honourable parents to provide us with rice, were"—

"Honourable master," moaned Koku-un, "*hai!* we did it! We gleaned the last coin they had! *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

"*Amida! Amida! Amida!*" said the other, trembling like a whipped monkey.

"Listen," said Saikei. "Since I last saw you, I have had many wonderful experiences, and my heart is changed. I am about to

become a hermit, and to lead a life of penitence and fasting."

Upon hearing this, the robbers sat up on their heels; their eyes dilated, and their mouths gaped like the shells of thirsty oysters.

The priest did not notice their actions, but continued, as though his thoughts were far away,—

"I had intended to renounce the magic arts which I have lately learned, and to begin my life of austerity to-day; but, from what you say, I must first teach the children of Takeakira a lesson, or they will seek to be revenged upon me when I no longer have the power of defence."

"*Hai*,—kill them! kill them!" murmured the giant.

"No, I will not kill them," Saikei absently replied. "There is a great drought in Omi, and the Thunder-animal whose business it is to make rain in the province is unable to perform his duty. I shall therefore cut off the water from the castle of Kwannon-ji until such time as the children of Takeakira will solemnly promise never to molest me for the wrong I have unwittingly done their parents."

"Honourable master," murmured Koku-un, "if you dry up the mother-spring of the great well of Kwannon-ji, everybody in Omi will die of thirst."

"I only intend to bring Lord Sasaki Ujiyori, and his councillor Sir Yamada Nobujiro Norimichi, and the children of Takeakira, to their senses," replied Saikei. "As soon as the people show signs of distress, I will send one of you to make terms for me. Now do as I bid! Koku-un, throw that bottle of *saké* into the valley."

"Honourable exalted master!" cried the astonished giant. "Please allow us to empty it! It is the rope of our lives."

"*Hai, hai, hai!*" pleaded Haku-un. "Please do!"

Saikei regarded them sternly; then, using his magic art, caused the bottle to rise from the boiling water, and to dart into the air, high above the valley, from whence it fell as though dropped from a cloud. His companions regarded this miracle with blanched faces, then, bowing with the usual accompaniment, murmured,—

"Satisfied! Satisfied!"

Saikei smiled, and said,—

"Assist me once more, and you shall never again want either food, wine, clothing, or shelter."

He related his adventures with the wife of the Thunder-animal, and at the castle of Kwannon-ji, and ended by saying,—

"Although I am proof against the fatal effects of weapons, that arrow of mugwort hurt me badly. I feel it even now. I shall retire to a high place in this mountain, and spend seven days in fasting and meditation. You descend to the nearest city, and purchase a *shimenawa* [rope of straw], a bell, a rosary, a low table, a picture of Raiden [god of thunder], and certain scrolls of which I will give you a written description; then buy new robes for yourselves. Return quickly, guard me carefully, as I shall instruct you, and I will keep my promise concerning your future."

He wrote the memorandum, and gave it with three pieces of gold to Koku-un, remarking,—

"Now start with your companion. You will find me here on your return."

That night Saikei moved from place to place upon the mountain, until he found the spot formerly occupied by the temple of Kwannon, where the priest Setsusan once built his grass hut, overlooking the valley

in which Amada Buhei killed The-deer-of-five-colours.

It was a smooth ledge, close to a waterfall, just below where the latter tumbled over the rocks and fell sheer into the valley; and it could be approached only by a winding path, easily guarded by two sturdy fellows like Koku-un and Haku-un.

The next morning, Saikei met the vagabonds at the rendezvous agreed upon, and found they had minutely followed his instructions, and that neither of them had even smelled *saké*.

He conducted them to the ledge near the waterfall, and, after placing the desk in position, laid the scrolls, bell, and rosary upon it, and, hanging up the picture of the god of thunder, said,—

“Stretch the rope of straw across the waterfall, high above my resting-place, so that neither demons nor human agency can prevail against me.”

Koku-un descended the chasm, and Haku-un secured a long cord and stone to the end of the straw rope, and threw it across to him. Then the *shime-nawa* was drawn up to the top of the arching rock extending across the front of the fall, where its streamers waved to and fro, agitated by the currents of air created by the descending water.

As soon as this was done, the men returned, and, kneeling before the priest, bowed in the usual manner; when he, leaning on his desk, said,—

“You will for seven days strictly guard the pathway by which this place is approached, and will not

permit either woodcutter, charcoal-burner, woman, or *saké* to come near me, or I cannot successfully work the spell that will cut off the spring from the castle of Kwannon-ji. Wear your white over-robcs above your black, and when one of you sleeps let the other be wide awake. If you fail in strictly obeying my instructions, you know how I can punish you! Respect my words. Now go down to the next platform, and remain there.”

Koku-un and Haku-un bowed profoundly, then rose, and retired to the lower ledge; after which, a dense fog settled upon the mountain, and they could only hear Thunder Priest tinkling his bell, reading the magic scrolls, and worshipping heaven and earth.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

Human nature is very perverse. Like the moon shining between the clouds on a stormy night, the good impulses of some people seldom last long enough to benefit the world.

Had Saikei kept his virtuous determination, and, renouncing the magic arts, retired to the spot where his honourable father had sinned; and had he made atonement by a life of penitence, fasting, and prayer,—he would have escaped the fate he most dreaded.

It was the opinion of many of the sages, that, as the gods plan our existences from the beginning to the close, it is useless to combat fate. This appears to me strange: as I am certain, if I thrust my hand into the fire, it will be burnt; and if I jump over a precipice into deep water, I shall be drowned. Other of the sages think that we can, in a measure, shape our lives in this state.

These are very profound problems.

BAKIN.

CHAPTER XVI

TAYE RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS FROM A SPIRIT

ONE evening in summer, when the sun was tinging the distant ranges of Musa, and the blue haze was rolling across the rank grass of the lowlands, Taye and Tajikichi approached the tomb of Mountain-of-Snow, and, after replenishing the *shikimi* and the water, burned some incense before it, also at the shrine containing the miraculous image of Kwannon and the tablets of their uncle and father and mother.

The fireflies moving hither and thither became more numerous as the shadows fell, and reminded the children that it was time they returned to the castle: so they worshipped the tablets, and Taye said,—

“Honourable father, Tajikichi is here with me! Although our enemy has, by the aid of magic arts, hereto evaded us, and our livers are dried up with shame and mortification, we pray daily to the ever-merciful Kwannon, and invoke the aid of Amida Buddha,—yet our weapons are as bright as ice, and the priest lives! Indeed, indeed, honourable father, this is not our fault. Please assure our honourable mother that we have done our utmost to avenge you.”

After repeating their prayers, they rose, and started homeward; when they heard a curious noise, and, upon glancing backward, saw a metal mirror and some hawk’s feathers lying upon the ground. Then a light emanated from the tomb, and quickly assumed the form of a beautiful girl, whose white robes and black tresses waved in the evening breeze, and whose face was as luminous as the moon.

Upon seeing this apparition, Taye dropped her hat and stick, and kneeling, bowed her head; while Tajikichi, fearing the spirit was a badger or a fox desirous of bewitching them, stood prepared to draw his sword.

The mysterious being evidently wished to communicate with Taye; who, knowing mortals must always speak first to a ghost, again bowed, respectfully drew in her breath, and said,—

“Honourable being, I await your commands.”

The white figure regarded them very attentively; then said in a low, sweet voice, like a distant murmur,—

“I pity you. You are most dutiful, yet have met with severe misfortune. However, your hearts will soon be light. The sky now so dark will to-morrow be illuminated by the sun.”

Thus speaking, she raised her right arm, and extended her hand horizontally; when the image quitted the shrine, and appeared upon her palm, and she said,—

“This honourable goddess was once enshrined in her temple on Mount Iwato; and when the latter was destroyed, this was carefully guarded by the priest Setsusan. Take it: by its aid you will conquer all obstacles.”

The girl, sitting up, motioned to her brother to receive the image; when the spirit said,—

“Taye, you must assume charge of this, and of the mirror and feathers. Have no fear: approach me, and listen to my instructions.” Noticing that Tajikichi kept his

hand upon his sword: "You must not hesitate. I am neither a fox, demon, nor badger, but am commanded to assist you. Please leave us alone for a few moments."

"Go!" bravely whispered Taye to her brother. "If she can aid us to obtain the wish of our hearts, I fear nothing she may do to me."

Tajikichi reluctantly quitted her, and went out of hearing.

"Closer,—closer yet!" the spirit said. "No one but yourself must hear what I have to communicate."

Taye advanced until she could almost touch the garments of the spirit, when the latter said,—

"Saikei, the Thunder Priest, is on Mount Iwato, working a magical spell to dry up the springs in the castle of Kwannon-ji, and thus bring great misery upon the inhabitants. His desire is to obtain your forgiveness for the wrong he has done your father and mother. Will you agree to give this pledge, or bring death and misery upon your benefactors and the clansmen? for, when the spring in the castle is dried up, not another in the province will flow. Think of it! If you and your brother will only renounce your revenge, you can avert a great evil from your benefactors and from thousands of innocent people."

Taye's eyes flashed as she proudly replied,—

"What demon are you, who thus dare to tempt me from the path of duty? Though every spring in the province be dried, and we die tortured by thirst, neither I nor my brother will give such a promise. This is a most cruel temptation, but we cannot descend to the pit as unfilial children. No, no, no! I will invoke supernatural aid as he has done, even if by so doing I forfeit all hope of a seat upon the lotus-terrace. I will meet his magic with witchcraft!"

The spirit regarded her with admiration, and said,—

"You have been tried, and found worthy of the benevolence about to be extended to you. Place this image in your bosom, with the mirror and feathers, and listen to me."

She whispered for a long while to Taye; who nodded her head many times, and finally said,—

"I understand all; and, when I have accomplished it, I shall retire from the world."

The mysterious being presented her with a small package; then, changing into a ball of fire, floated towards the tomb, and, after hovering above it for a few seconds, slowly ascended to the sky, and was lost to view.

Taye summoned her brother, and said,—

"That was the spirit of Mountain-of-Snow, which appeared to aid us. If you will implicitly obey me, we will overcome the priest's magic. The spiritual bird has preserved its honesty and loyalty in all its existences. I believe it has now attained *Nirvana*."

Upon reaching the castle, they found a party preparing to go in search of them, and Sir Yamada very anxious upon their account.

Taye told him of Saikei's designs, and said,—

"He will succeed if his attendants prevent woodcutters, charcoal-burners, women, and *saké* from approaching him. I will represent the last two things he dreads."

"And I the first," said Sir Yamada.

"And I the second," added Tajikichi.

Although it was very late, the councillor asked for an audience with Lord Sasaki, to whom he communicated the danger that threatened the castle and province.

"This is serious," said the lord. "Doubtless the spiritual aid of Mountain-of-Snow will be of great assistance to the maiden; but how can a weak girl like her confront three such ruffians as Thunder Priest and his aids.

Sir Yamada replied,—

"The filial love of Taya will enable her to overcome demons."

"I leave the matter to you," said his lord. "You and the boy accompany her. You must also have the mountain surrounded with armed men."

When Taya retired for the night, she said to her brother,—

"To-morrow, by this time, either we or our enemy will be under the shadow of the tall grass."

CHAPTER XVII

THE MOON SHINES BETWEEN THE DARK CLOUDS

THE morning mists were still veiling the castle of Kwannon-ji and its vicinity when Taya rose, and prepared for the encounter with her enemy.

After carefully performing her ablutions, she clothed herself in nun's garments, and suspended a bell from her waist; then procuring a new pail of white wood, which she filled with *saké*, proceeded to the temple of Kwannon, where kneeling before the shrine of the goddess, she cut off her long tresses, and, making a secret vow, laid them upon a side altar. She consulted with the old priest on duty, who, after blessing the *saké* and vessel, gave her three of the lotus-leaves from the sacred vase; having received which, she prayed fervently to Kwannon, and returned to the castle, where she found Sir Yamada and Tajikichi disguised as a wood-cutter and a charcoal-burner, their long straw coats effectively hiding their armour and swords.

The court-yard was filled with armed retainers, who impatiently paced the flags, and wetted the rivets of their swords, as though eager to draw them in defence of the filial children.

Taya retired to her room, and placed the image of Kwannon and the feathers in her sleeves, hid the metal mirror in the bosom of her robe, and a short sword in her girdle; then, secreting in her right hand the little package given her by the spirit of Mountain-of-Snow, returned to the court-yard. She arranged the sacred lotus-leaves in the bucket of *saké* so as to hide its contents, and announced that she was ready to depart.

The procession fell into military order, passed across the drawbridge in silence, and vanished beneath the pall of mist that covered but did not moisten the rice-fields of the plain.

Upon reaching the base of Iwato, Taya said,—

"Permit me to ascend alone."

"No," urged her brother. "If our enemy overcomes you, he must also kill me."

"It is the duty of the younger to obey the elder," said his sister. "Have no fear: I carry a charm that will counteract his magic."

"She is right," said Sir Yamada. "I will post my men; then we will ascend half way up the mountain, and be ready if Taya needs our aid."

The girl knelt before her benefactor, bowed her head to the ground, and, drawing a deep respiration, said,—

"Honourable councillor, your kindness is as boundless as the air. Please accept my poor thanks for the many services you have rendered us."

Sir Yamada inclined his head, and, biting his trembling lips, replied,—

"All I have done for you is but as a grain of sand when compared with your filial piety."

Taye rose, and, taking the pail in her left hand, struck her bell with a hammer she carried in her right, and, ascending the rocky pathway, was soon lost to sight and hearing.

When she felt that the mists hid her from those above and below, she set down her pail, and opened the package given her by the spirit. After removing several wrappers, she discovered a small *tama* [ball], which, upon being exposed to the air, gave out a dense, sweetly perfumed smoke.

The brave girl held her face over this; and, when the substance had burned away, she drew forth the mirror, and by the dawning light, piercing the mist, discovered—as the spirit had predicted—that she resembled Hachisuba costumed as a nun.

"You were very beautiful and very unfortunate," murmured Taye. "I assume your form with great reluctance; but, as I have no other means of accomplishing my desire, I will not reject this."

By that time the sun had risen above the barriers of the mountains, and was illuminating the high peaks, deep valleys, and strangely formed rocks that seemed as though they had been cut with a knife or dug with a chisel.

Taye hid the mirror in the bosom of her robe, and, once more taking the pail in her left hand, resumed her journey; striking her bell as she advanced, and invoking the holy name of Kwannon.

After a while she obtained glimpses of the higher plateau; but the place of her destination was still enveloped in a dense mist, from which lightning flashed, and thunder rolled into the valley.

As she advanced, these manifestations ceased; and she heard the faint tinkle of a priest's bell, issuing from the cloud. This caused her face to glow, and her heart to beat like a drum; but she set her teeth, and, compressing her lips, rapidly threaded the winding path.

Koku-un, who was on guard, listened in amazement, and murmured,—

"Pilgrim!"

He kicked Haku-un, who was sleeping in a sheltered nook, and said,—

"*Moshi!* Wake up! There is a pilgrim coming this way! What did honourable Thunder Priest instruct us to do with holy pilgrims?"

"Knock them on the head," drowsily replied the other, "but search them thoroughly before you throw them into the valley."

"*Ye!*" cried the giant, shaking him. "What are you talking about? You forget the promises of honourable Thunder Priest."

"*Oya! oya!*" cried the little man, waking with a start. "Why do you treat me thus?"

Koku-un hurriedly explained; then both listened, and heard from above the tinkling of Saikei's bell, and his muttered invocations, and from below the sound made by Taye.

"Very curious!" whispered the giant. "I will ascertain what is coming, then inform honourable Thunder Priest."

He advanced to the edge of a pile of rocks jutting over the pathway, and, peering down into the valley, saw Taye ascending rapidly.

"What is it?" demanded Haku-un, creeping to his side. "*Oya!* It is the ripe persimmon from the Nameless Temple."

"*Sa!* She is dead!" whispered Koku-un. "Strange thing! Perhaps her ghost has come to beg the assistance of honourable Thunder Priest."

"*Ye!*" sneered Haku-un. "Ghosts do not walk during daylight! Let us descend, and stop her. You know honourable Thunder Priest gave us strict instructions not to allow females to ascend the mountain."

They rose, and, hurrying down the pathway, met Taye, and shouted to her, "Go back! Go back!"

The girl did not reply, whereupon Koku-un whispered to Haku-un,—

"It is the spirit of the blossom of the Nameless Temple!"

Haku-un averted his face, and, said, out of the left corner of his mouth,—

"Mysterious thing! That is the ripe persimmon; and," sniffing behind his sleeve, "I smell the perfume of *saké!* *Moshi!* Say a prayer to it. Perhaps it is a fox or a badger."

"*Namu Amida Butsu!*" thundered the giant in a voice that attracted Saikei.

Then Taye spoke, saying,—

"Although I am only a woman, I am an honourable follower of Buddha; so please let me pass, as I desire to visit the sacred spot once occupied by the temple of the merciful Kwannon."

"Go back! Go back!" exclaimed the guards. "The place you mention is some distance from here. This waterfall protects the sacred cave containing the three precious things, and is occupied by a pious

hermit. Not even the woodcutter and charcoal-burner are allowed to approach. It is therefore useless for a woman to think of such a thing. You must descend quickly, and not return."

Taye listened patiently, and replied,—

"I am seeking the holy man, and have ascended many high places in order to find him. Permit me to pass."

"I tell you, No!" said Koku-un. "The holy hermit must not look upon your face. Go back!"

"Yes, go back," said Haku-un, "or I will throw you over the cliff!"

The girl, unmoved by their threats, continued to advance, and strike her bell; the guards retreating before her, gesticulating and shouting vociferously, until they stood almost on a level with Thunder Priest,—when the latter, willing away the clouds, beheld Taye, and, believing her to be Hachisuba, said to them,—

"Stop!"

At the same instant, she glanced upward, and seeing his burr-like head, the holy spot upon his brow, and the *shime-nawa* across the waterfall, knew that she had found her enemy. Instead of showing hatred, she smiled, and said,—

"Honourable Living Master, do you not remember me?"

Saikei leaned upon his copper bell, and, glancing down at her, replied in a gentle voice,—

"Honourable nun, we have met before. I have retired to this spot to fast and meditate for seven days. This is the sixth. If you will return to the foot of this mountain, and remain there until to-morrow at noon, I will descend, and hear your petition. I presume you require some service of me."

Taye regarded him earnestly, and said,—

"Give me but one moment alone with you to-day, and I will obey you. I do not desire to approach any nearer. Please send those men out of hearing, so that I may make a most important communication to you."

Saikei glanced at the rope of straw, which he knew would protect him from the approach of any evil thing; then ordered his guards to descend the mountain, and await the return of his visitor.

The rascals retired, grumbling to themselves; they fearing, if the spell were broken, he would not be able to keep his promise.

When they were at a safe distance, he approached the edge of the rock, and, gazing down upon Taye, said,—

"Are you Hachisuba, or a fox or badger endeavouring to entrap me?"

"Look at me!" she passionately replied. "Am I not the *koto*-player you met at Kanzaki, the Hachisuba who risked her life for your sake at Sokokura?"

He rang his bell, and repeated a formula against temptation; then, averting his face from her, said,—

"I have believed you to be lying under the shadow of the tall grass. How is it that you come to me at this inopportune moment? Listen: I have learned the magic art, and am here working a spell that will rid me of my only enemy, a yellow-bill named Tajikichi, the son of Ihara Jirojiro Takeakira, who has sworn to take my life. If you be Hachisuba, and not a mountain spirit, I pray you to leave me for another day; after which, I will renounce my robes and magic art, and become your husband. If I approach any nearer to you than this, my revenge will never be accomplished."

Taye's heart almost burst its bounds as she listened to his speech;

but she retained an outward calmness, and replied in a tender voice,—

"Honourable Living Master, in learning the magic art, have you forgotten the past? Remember the evening at Kanzaki, when you first drank from the delightful cup! Remember the meeting at Sokokura, how you escaped, and she who loved you suffered! Since that time,—ah! long before it,—I have lived but to enjoy the happiness of this moment. You ask me whether I am a fox, a badger, or a mountain spirit,—I, who have longed to meet you so earnestly, who have travelled over mountains and through rivers to behold your face!"

"Hachisuba, go back,—go back!" he commanded. "Wait but one day more, and all will be well!"

Taye, who feared she would be unable to accomplish her desire, wept bitterly; and Saikei, retiring to his desk, rang his bell, and, facing the *kakemono* of the Thunder-god, recommenced his incantations.

The girl listened with an awed expression, then remembering the mirror, drew it from her bosom, and, holding it in the sun, flashed its light upon his face; whereupon the picture caught fire, and, burning up with a great noise, vanished.

"Ah! I will yet conquer him, if I can only sever the *shime-nawa*!" she thought. "I must risk all, and compel him to drink a cup of *sake*."

Saikei, who appeared stupefied by the burning of the *kakemono*, rose, and, moving to the edge of the precipice, regarded her in a dazed manner, and said,—

"I have lost some of my magic power. I command you to retire! I believe you are a mountain spirit."

Upon hearing this, Taye wept until her face resembled the dew-laden blossom of the beautiful *kaido* [*Pyrus spectabilis*], and her eyebrows were like young willows wet

with rain ; while he dug his finger-nails into the muscles of his arms, and bit his lips until they were crimson.

After a while Taye ceased weeping, like one who has suddenly made a desperate resolve. She dried her tears, bowed respectfully, made a deep respiration, sat up on her heels, and, exhibiting the metal mirror, said,—

“Am I as nothing in your sight? Do you not remember this? You forgot it upon the mountain-side, but I have never forgotten you! Behold the cords of five colours with which this gift is bound! Take it! I will retire, and end my life, which is no longer useful to any one. I feel as though the sun and moon had ceased to shine. A—h!”

Saikei breathed quickly, and, averting his face, replied,—

“In the olden time, Saito Tokuyori visited Sogano, but did not meet the one he sought. Have a little patience. To-morrow all will be accomplished, and I will do as I have promised.”

“No, no, no!” she exclaimed, extending her hands beseechingly. “Look at me once more! Oh, look at me lovingly, but for an instant, and I will never trouble you again!”

The priest slowly turned his head, and, glancing down, beheld her face reflected in the mirror; then he whispered,—

“Come up here! I will forego my revenge, and renounce my magic art.”

Taye, who could scarcely control her joy, took the pail in her hand, and, quickly ascending the pathway, stood face to face with her enemy; who, regarding her tenderly, said in a low tone,—

“You have returned, as from Paradise, to tempt me; but I cannot resist you any more than I did at Kanzaki. Hachisuba!”

He advanced, took from her hand the cup of *saké* she extended to him, and, draining its contents, fell into a swoon. At the same instant, his desk, bell, rosary, and magic scrolls were caught up into a thunder-cloud, and vanished like a flash of light; and Taye resumed her proper form.

She took the image from her sleeve, and, placing it upon the rock on the edge of the waterfall, invoked the aid of Kwannon; then, drawing forth the feathers, laid them before the goddess.

The relics gradually swelled until they were as large as the body of a hawk; when Taye, obeying the instructions given her by the spirit, thrust them into the bosom of her robe, and instantly felt herself raised from the ground, and soaring towards the bridge of the waterfall, across which was suspended the sacred rope that still preserved her enemy from bodily harm.

As she drew her dagger, and cut the straw, a lurid light illuminated the fall; and the figure of Kwannon, rising from the edge of the rock, manifested itself to the insensible priest, then vanished skyward in a purple flame.

Taye, having accomplished her object, slowly returned to the rocky platform, where Saikei was reclining with the bucket for a support.

She drew the feathers from her robe, and, permitting them to be blown from her hand, saw them vanish like thistle-down over the mountain-top.

After a while, Saikei awoke from his trance, and beholding Taye said,—

“I have had a vision of the merciful Kwannon, who, pitying my misfortunes, has shown me the errors of my life. I have sinned deeply, but am now thoroughly repentant.”

The girl regarded him sternly, and replied,—

"I am Taye, elder sister of Tajikichi, who desires to avenge the wrong you did to our honourable father."

"I know all," he calmly responded. "I have no wish to evade your brother."

She kept her hand upon her dirk, and listened to the sound of approaching voices; being determined that Saikei should not escape.

In a few moments Sir Yamada and Tajikichi reached the spot, and they were quickly followed by some clansmen bearing the heads of Kaku-un and Haku-un.

"There is our enemy!" said Taye, pointing to the priest, who was kneeling, reciting his prayers.

"This moment repays us for all our misery."

The boy approached Saikei, and after announcing his name, and relating the story of his father's wrongs, bowed and said,—

"Have you any reason why you should not receive my blade? You know the punishment of heaven and earth [God and man]."

Saikei bowed, sucked in his breath, and replied,—

"I assumed the black robe when I was but a child, desiring to pray for the salvation of my parents; but I yielded to the terrible temptation that has clouded my life. However, now that has passed away, and I can see the light of the glorious moon. I beg you will give me that mirror."

Taye, who, being a woman, understood his request, advanced, bowed respectfully, and, keeping her face upon the ground, held out Hachisuba's fatal gift.

He received it thankfully, and, after reverently raising it to his forehead, hurled it into the waterfall; then, turning to Sir Yamada and

Tajikichi, bowed, and, baring his neck, said to the boy,—

"Now strike, and avenge the wrong of your honourable parent. *Namu Amida Butsu!*"

As the blade descended, Kwannon Sama appeared in the waterfall.

Saikei had died truly penitent.

NOTE BY THE JAPANESE AUTHOR.

After the issue of my first romances, I received many letters from readers who desired to know more concerning the characters in whose fortunes they had become interested. This set me thinking; and I have ever since added a note to each book, and thus made the necessary explanations.

The death of Saikei was duly reported to Lord Sasaki, and the body buried in a proper manner. His lordship praised the filial conduct of the children, gave them numerous presents, and instructed Sir Yamada to take them to Sokokura so that they might have an opportunity of worshipping at the grave of their honourable parent.

He also, in gratitude for the merciful interposition of Kwannon, ordered her temple to be rebuilt on Mount Iwato.

Taye and Tajikichi spent several weeks at Sokokura, where they performed their filial duty, and were entertained by Lord Kiga, who instructed the boy in the art of falconry, and gave him a quantity of *oto-kiri-kusa* seeds, several fine hawks, and many other valuable tokens of his esteem.

During their stay, the councillor, who had acted as Takeakira's second, visited the children, and presented Taye with a small package containing the poem written by her father. The girl reverently pressed it to her forehead, then, after reading it, sobbed, and said,—

"I will never part with this precious relic of our honourable parent."

They many times visited the Nameless Temple, and were much gratified with the care bestowed upon their father's tomb.

Upon their return to Kwannon-ji, Taye in fulfilment of her vow shaved her head, and, receiving the Buddhistic commandments, became the nun Miyo-un-ni.

Lord Sasaki pensioned her, and made her keeper of the temple of Kwannon on Mount Iwato.

Upon the night of her installation,

Kwannon appeared to her, and to Lord Sasaki, Sir Yamada, and Tajikichi, and said,—

"Many mysterious things occur, that are never explained; thus causing severe strain upon the minds of those connected with them.

"The original source of misery was the killing of The-deer-of-five-colours, which was a holy creature, born in the shadow of my ancient temple on Iwato.

"This crime was avenged by the death of Amada Buhei's wife, and of the wicked hunter. Then, in order to counteract any good that might come to Amada by his son becoming a priest, the spirit of the deer entered the body of Hachisuba, and clouded the life of Saikei.

"Tomosada Monoyemon of Kioto, who bought the skin of the sacred animal, changed his world by hanging; and his son Tomosada of Obata, inheriting the result of his crime, was visited by Saikei, and reduced to bitter poverty.

"Takeyasu and Takeakira, the sons of Ihara Taketoshi, who purchased the relic from Tomosada of Kioto, were punished for their father's act, and also for their disloyalty in not dying with their chief, Nitta Yoshisada. All these were unavoidable results of bad causes; Amada Buhei's act being the origin of a chain of crimes, the punishment of which was stopped only by the filial devotion of Taye and Tajikichi.

"Priest Saikei, having once been initiated in the sacred mysteries, was permitted to reform at the point of death."

The revelation of Kwannon Sama greatly comforted those to whom it was made, and increased the number of worshippers at her temple.

Tajikichi married the daughter of Sir Yamada, and was appointed chief falconer to the Shogun. He lived for many years in Kioto, and his sons and their descendants faithfully served the Ashikaga.

Miyo-un-ni [Taye] became famous for her piety and learning. She tranquilly passed her days in the temple of Kwannon, and attained the honourable age of ninety years.

Upon the day she changed her world, Tajikichi dreamed that she had visited him, and presented him with the poem written by their father.

When he awoke, he proceeded to the room containing the family altar, where

he found the precious relic lying before the tablet of his parent.

Taking the scroll in his right hand, he respectfully raised it to his forehead, then opened it, and read the beautiful lines.

As he did so, his eyes became filled with tears, and his lips trembled with grief; for he knew that his loyal sister had become *Hotoke*.

After placing the scroll in a lacquered case, he wrapped the latter in a piece of old brocade, and deposited it in a place of safety; having done which, he summoned his wife and family, and thus addressed them:—

"My honourable elder sister has started upon a long journey; and I must visit her late place of residence, and perform the duties of a younger brother.

"You, my elder son, will represent me in my absence; and you, Taye, my younger daughter, will accompany me."

Then they set out for Iwato. The travellers arrived at the temple of Kwannon at the moment when the torch was about to be applied to the funeral pyre of Miyo-un-ni.

Tajikichi knelt by the body, and after respectfully saluting it said,—

"Honourable elder sister, your loving thought of your younger brother is very precious to me. I have come over mountains and through rivers to pay my last respect to you. Your memory will be held in veneration by a hundred thousand descendants of our house."

When he applied the torch, her body was consumed slowly like incense, giving out a fragrant smoke.

After Tajikichi's return to Kioto, he wrote the following poem:—

"In life as pure and fragrant as the lotus,
Her body changed to dust in perfumed clouds."

This romance, which is founded upon old stories told by aged persons, was written to promote filial devotion among the young, and to show that even a *bozu*, trained in the austerities of a holy life, and fortified by a hundred thousand ways against temptation, may, like the wisest of us, become a Captive of Love.

Written late in the spring,

In the year of the Rabbit.

BAKIN,
Respectfully.

THE END

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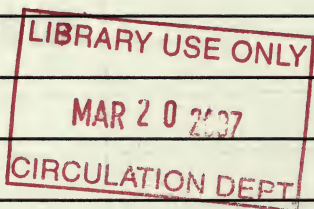
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